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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the four issues of the "Journal of Educational Relations" published during 1995. The Journal's motto is "Promoting Student Achievement through Positive School-Home-Community Relationships." Articles in the first issue include: "Disarming Information: Ways to Counter Negative Critics" (Gerald Bracey); "Most Superintendents Appear to be Passive: A Study of Districts in Four States Reveals a Low Priority for Public Relations" (Theodore Kowalski and Terry Weidmer); and "Bond and Budget Battles: Do's and Don'ts to Avoid Being Defeated" (David Sandler). Articles in the second issue include: "School as a Community: We Need To Accept and Even Celebrate the Difference among Students and All the Staff" (Carl Loggo); "Home Visits Offer Opportunities to Make an Excellent First Impression" (Michell Holifield and Rob Donner); "An Excellent Public Relations Program Can Begin with Low-Cost Methods" (William Sharp and others); and "The Opening Door: The Decision-Making Process Should Allow for Parent Involvement" (Lynn Ainsworth). Articles in the third issue include: "Community Relations Start with the Internal School Climate" (John Yantis); "School Public Relations: Do It Right or Don't Do It at All!" (David Martinson); and "Polish Your Board's Image: Would a First-Time Attendee at a Meeting of Your Board Gain a Positive or Negative Image?" (Marilyn Hart). Articles in the fourth issue include: "Parents, Students, Community Members: Teachers and Administrators Desire Their Increased Participation in Making Educational Decisions" (David Brown and others); "12 Ways to Reduce Stress: Advice to Administrators to Stay Healthy" (Robert Gerardi); and "Communication Failure Can Threaten Progress" (Bill Carr). Each issue offers a case study and/or response which examines connections between student achievement and the school, community, and parent relationship. (JW)

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# The Journal of Educational Public RELATIONS

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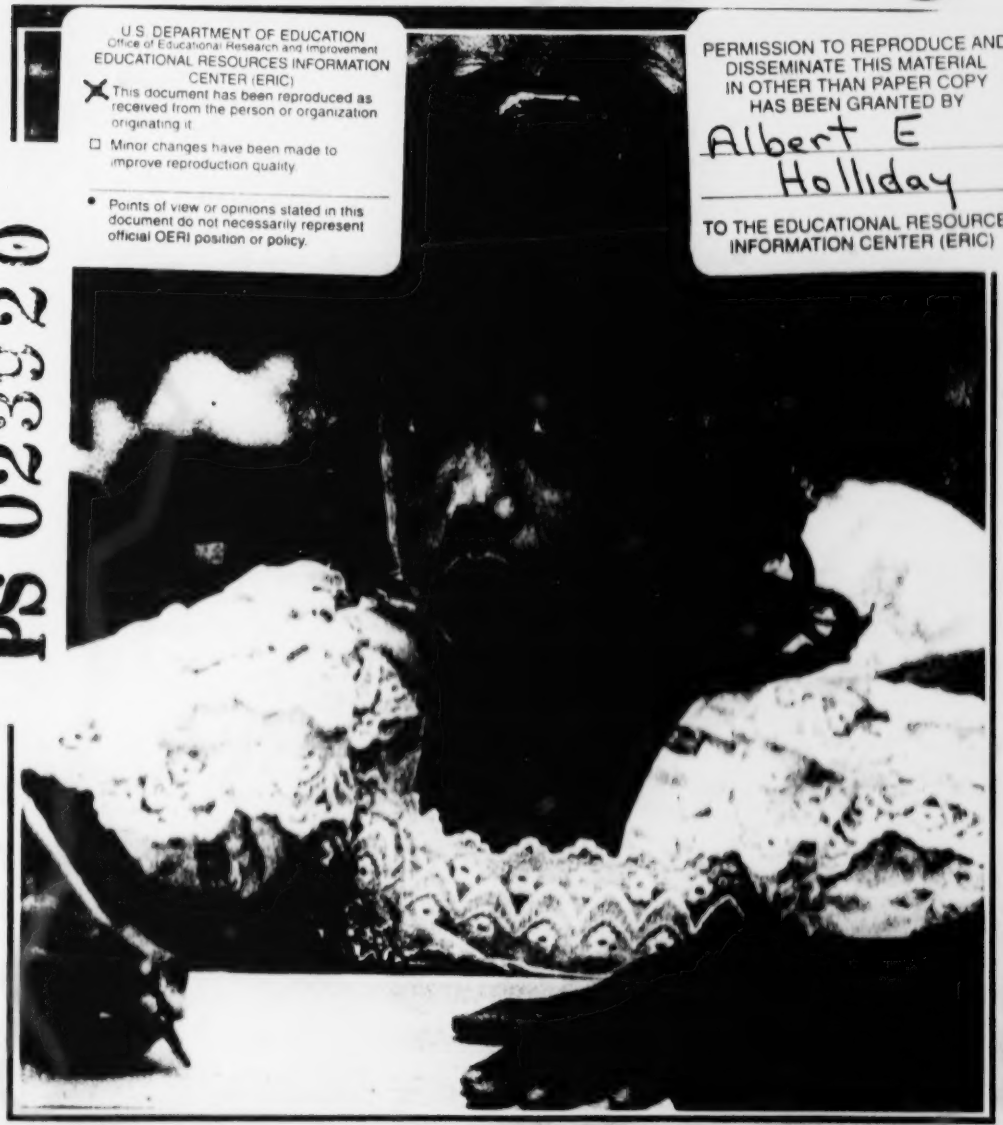

Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships • Vol. 16 No. 1

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# Notes From the Editor

## Two Publications to Brighten Your New Year

Educators who know better have been puzzled for the past 10 years with the negative perception many reporters in national news media have had, and expressed, about the present overall quality of education.

Could it be, one can speculate, that certain officials in a past presidential administration decided to pander to the religious right and private school sector by planting misleading and erroneous information about public education?

If public confidence in their tax-supported schools could be eroded, perhaps citizens would be stimulated to persuade their legislators to enact vouchers or choice programs, the speculators suggest. That would allow private/parochial parents to recoup at least part of their tuition cost from public funds. And, the doors would be open to business people to form for-profit schools. After all, if for-profit McDonald-type cafeterias can work in schools, why not extend the concept all the way, in our capitalistic society, to the educational program itself?

The speculations may appear to be extreme. However, a fair analysis of statistics from two sources (which do not have a vested interest in either the status quo or the collapse of the public school system) indicates that the "Facts" about United States schools being in a major state of decline in recent years are not supported by the evidence. These two sources are *Rand* and *Sandia* Laboratories.

- In December, the *Rand Corporation* media research-based report in which the authors state that public education is **better** today than it was 20 years ago. The Rand study was led by David W. Grissmer who told the Associated Press in December that "prevailing perceptions" about the present state of public education "are too gloomy...There is no support for charges that our families, students, schools and public policies [regarding public education] are failing." The study also indicates that today's young parents are better educated than their counterparts of 20 years ago. (The Rand study is available, at $15 plus $3 shipping, from the corporation at 2100 M St., NW, Washington DC 20037; (202) 296-5000.).
- We commissioned Gerald Bracey to write the lead article in this issue. He has become well known, at least in education circles, because of his "Bracey Report" in the *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine. (His first article in 1991 was based in large measure on a study that was issued by the *Sandia National Laboratories*, New Mexico. The U.S. Department of Energy had funded Sandia to study "key issues in education and the most pressing challenges...regarding the state of education in America." The authors wrote that "Where feasible we looked at data over time to put the performance of the current system in proper perspective. To our surprise, on nearly every measure **we found steady or slightly improving trends.**" The Sandia report was in direct contrast to a decade of articles and reports—starting with *A Nation at Risk*—and was not distributed widely. The complete report was later published in a monograph issue of the *Journal of Educational Research* in May/June, 1993. This issue may be available for $11 from Heldref Publications, 1319 18th St., NW, Washington DC 20036-1802, and is available on Microform from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor.)

In our article, Bracey relates some of his experiences in dealing with and confronting misinformed and misinforming critics and writers and his few modest successes in setting the record straight. We asked him to suggest actions educators and communicators ought to take, at least at the local and state levels, to counter critics and incorrect information. To its credit, the American Association of School Administrators also commissioned Bracey to write, and his 127-page text *Transforming America's Schools* was issued in October. In it, he poses a strong case that public schools are making great strides with children. He also details a number of major improvements that are sorely needed. The text is $17.95 plus $3.50 shipping (AASA, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209; 800-771-1162).

## The Tide Has Turned

Am I suggesting that teachers, administrators and communicators should take the offense about erroneous information when it appears? You bet. Whether unfair criticism appears in a newspaper feature or a columnist's report or in a national magazine reference, I write a note or a letter and refer the writer to a source such as those cited above. Publishers who receive enough correspondence of this nature will be sure to have their writers attempt to provide balanced accounts.

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*Cover photo by Geri Kodey*

by Gerald W. Bracey

# Disarming Misinformation—

## Ways to counter negative critics

People sure love to say nasty things about the nation's public schools. This is hardly new, though. In 1912, Ella Frances Synch wrote in the *Ladies Home Journal*: "American education is stupid in its methodology, useless in its plan, utterly ineffective in results." The *American Educational Review* offered regular summaries of criticisms in the 1920s, and they sounded much like what we read today. In the 1950s, critics intensified the rhetoric with Albert Lynd's *Wuackery in the Public Schools*, Arthur Bestor's *Educational Wastelands*, and Admiral Hyman Rickover speaking to any forum available.

Today, an array of critics offers a litany of complaints. "We have gotten used to finishing dead last in international math comparisons," said pundit Charles Krauthammer in July, 1994[1]. Earlier, Albert Shanker, president of the AFT, whom one would think might be in the schools' corner, had said "international examinations designed to compare students from all over the world usually show American Students at or near the bottom."[2] And as I write this, an article appears in *The Washington Post* by Stanford professors Michael Kirst and Henry Rowen stating, almost in passing, that the typical American 10-year-old is two years behind the typical Taiwanese or Japanese kid in mathematics and science.[3] Trouble is, what they say is not true.

Louis V. Gerstner, CEO of IBM, also hit on the international studies, but wasn't content to stop there in his 1994 book, *Reinventing Education*:

> In math and science, American high schools come in last or next to last in virtually every international measure. SAT scores have fallen to historic lows...Total spending on education in America is without equal in the world. Expenditures for public education increased in the decade of the eighties by 34 percent (in real dollars) yet the only output measures available were test scores which were, by and large, static...America's high school graduation rate is 72%[4].

None of these statements is true.

So why are people saying them? Well, as indicated in the opening paragraph, we've had a long history of abundant criticism. In some instances, it's just habit. In others, the criticism is less benign. Most of the Gerstner book was written by Hudson Institute Fellow Denis Doyle. Two years before the book appeared, I debated Doyle on the condition of education and he said the same things in virtually the exact same words. Some ideologically driven people are not interested in listening to facts.

Neither are some politically driven people. Reagan and Bush and their various minions all voiced a great deal of criticism of the schools as part of a strategy: If the schools are portrayed as abject failures often enough, maybe the public can be softened up to permit the transfer of public funds to private schools through vouchers and various choice

mechanisms.

Business and industry spokespeople and CEOs, while touting "partnerships" of various sorts, also find it in their self interest to complain about America's high school graduates. Although more of these complaints have to do with a lack of "work ethic" than with skills, if the curriculum becomes shaped towards business' needs, it means business people would have to spend less money for on-the-job training.

*"The American common school is an endangered species. The wimp in education [at universities] won't defend it. They're afraid of losing their money or access to the corridors of power." Induce people to visit schools to see what's really going on..*

At the university level, criticism is a means to an end. Shortly after the "First Bracey Report"5 appeared in the *Phi Delta Kappan*, I received a letter from David Clark, who had been dean of the School of Education at Indiana University when I was on the faculty there. "The American common school is an endangered species," wrote Clark. "The wimps in education won't defend it. They're afraid of losing their money or access to the corridors of power."

At the 1994 editorial board meeting of *Phi Delta Kappan*, Susan Fuhrman voiced a similar sentiment: "If you want money, you gotta say the schools are lousy. So what else is new?" Thus many a grant proposal is predicated on the assumption of school failure: *The system is broke. Give us some money and we'll fix it.*

Let's take a look at some of the data behind the allegations of failure of American's public schools, such as those of Gerstner.

In the first place, international comparisons long ago gave up trying to gather measures on high schoolers because different groups take such radically different courses of study. In the last such attempt, it was discovered that 50% of the seniors in Hungary were still taking mathematics, compared to only 16% here and a mere 2% in Hong Kong. Little wonder that the 2% of Hong Kong students had the highest average score. (The Third International Mathematics Study, scheduled for 1995, will make another attempt at senior level assessment, but the administrators admit it is a very complicated, difficult problem and the outcome is uncertain at this point.)

International comparisons now typically measure fourth- and eighth-graders and at these levels, American students are still faring quite well. At least some are. Ian Westbury found that while the Japanese students in the Second International Mathematics Study had the highest average scores, the top 20% of American students scored slightly higher in algebra than the top 20% of Japanese students[6]. In arithmetic, the top 50% of American classes had the identical score as the top 50% of Japanese classes. The bottom 50% of American students, however, fared quite poorly[7].

Overall, in the Second International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP-2) in mathematics and science, American ranks ranged from 3rd of 15 nations to 14th, while all actual scores were all quite near the international averages (this means, of course, that scores are tightly bunched: If a rank of #3 of 15 is close to the average and a rank of \$14

of 15 is close to the average, there can't be much distance between scores)[8].

We see similar results combining various NAEP reporting categories with eighth grade data from IAEP-2, which has itself been translated into NAEP scales by the national Center for Education Statistics[9, 10].

**Top Finishers:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Asian students, U.S. Schools | 287 |
| 2. Taiwan | 285 |
| 3. Korea | 283 |
| 4. Advantaged urban students, U.S. schools | 283 |
| 5. White students, U.S. schools | 277 |
| 6. Hungary | 277 |

**Bottom Finishers:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jordan | 246 |
| Mississippi | 246 |
| Hispanic students, U.S. schools | 245 |
| Disadvantaged urban students, U.S. schools | 239 |
| Black students, U.S. schools | 236 |

Since Asian and white students make up over 70% of the K-12 population, and since these groups score among the highest in the world, this means that most American students are World Class. Others, however, especially those living in poverty, are not even Third World (there is no category in this report of "disadvantaged rural poor," else there would be another entry at the low end). It is telling that many who criticize American schools find their horror stories only in the cities. As I showed in "The Second Bracey Report," there are worse tales to be told about the rural poor, but since they are dispersed across the land and the television stories also come out of the cities, no one notices them often[11]. But it is one thing to say we have areas of dire need, quite another to say that the whole system has failed, which it most obviously has not.

**What to do to counter misinformation.** Many in the media and critics continue to rain gloomy reports even when they're not true. Given the large amount of disinformation floating around, what is one to do to counter it?

- **Sometimes, nothing.** As noted, data-free ideologues aren't interested. I did, after reading Gerstner's book, launch a campaign in which, as I speak to audiences around the nation, I give them Gerstner's address and ask them to write him to stop telling lies about American schools. I also wrote a press release and had it distributed to all 270 papers in the National Press Building in Washington, DC. So far, no apparent impact.
- If the person slamming schools is not ideologically driven and is merely repeating the heard myths, it may be sufficient simply to **provide them with facts.** This, of course, assumes you know the facts and it is important that you arm yourself in this way. In 1991, William Raspberry wrote an article about differing conceptions of intelligence[12]. It was not an essay about schools, but in the course of it, Raspberry mentioned the "bewildering failure of American education." I fired off my first "Bracey Report," which had just been published. He summarized in another column and challenged readers to show him where I had "bamboozled" him[13]. My article alone was not sufficient to bring Raspberry around, but when he also came across an article on the successes of the Vietnamese boat people, he reached the conclusion that the "schools are doing a pretty good job of teaching children who arrive at school ready to learn." Ready to learn. What a concept. Raspberry has since written two other articles based on my analyses and several of them favorable to schools[14].

• **And keep at it.** If people are going to get six pieces of negative information, accurate or not, while you're putting out one, you're not going to change many minds. Even though I haven't persuaded Newsweek editors or writers to say anything really good about schools, I think I have had some small effect on making them more careful about what they do say. I send letters in response to anything that is false, over stated or incomplete; my later phone conversations with Newsweek's Washington education reporter, Pat Wingert, tell me that my stuff gets read and digested.

*Provide columnists and editors who err with facts and keep at it. I have had some small effect on making them [editors, writers] more careful about what they do say.*

Even after all the negativity, the value and power of mere information should not be overlooked. Recent polling data collected by the American Association of School Administrators document what other polls have found: people think the local schools are pretty good but "know" that there is a crisis in education. Some people looking at this data think Americans are schizophrenic. At a 1993 conference, the same Denis Doyle mentioned earlier decided that such discrepancies in attitudes are "scientific proof that ignorance is bliss."

The AASA data, though, went further than just documenting the different attitudes[15]. The poll asked where people got their information about schools. Overwhelmingly, people get their national information from only two sources: television and newspapers. Given the chronic complaints in these two sources, it's not surprising people think someone, somewhere, is in the throes of an education crisis.

But for local schools the situation is different. While newspapers and TV play a large role in providing information on local schools, so do friends, neighbors, children, school officials and school newsletters. Contrary to Doyle's claim, the poll results seem to corroborate another aphorism: Seeing is believing.

• It might be useful, therefore, to **insert in newsletters tidbits about American schools as well as about your own.** Things like: in 1993 the portion of SAT test takers scoring above 650 on the math section reached an all-time high. During 1993, *Education Week* had claimed that in the decade since "A Nation At Risk" the proportion had shrunk16. But when I checked out the numbers, I found the editors had omitted one whole group. Interestingly, while I was writing my article rebutting *Education Week's* con tentions, I had occasion to mention the editors' allegation to a number of people, including testmakers at ETS. Everyone thought *Education Week* was right and were quite surprised when I gave them data that proved otherwise.

• Once again, you've go to **know your facts.** Many can be found in my four "Bracey Reports," which appear each October in *Phi Delta Kappan*. Writings by David Berliner in *Kappan* and also in this Journal provide more information[17,18]. So

does *The Sandia Report*, known formally as "Perspectives on Education in America"[19]. This report, produced by social engineers at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, was suppressed for two years by the Bush Administration and finally saw light as the entirety of the May/June, 1993, *Journal of Educational Research*. I am currently working with one of the Sandia group to update and expand the data[18A].

This is perhaps the place to make a general point: many administrators have not been trained to handle and interpret data. Indeed, many of them had traumatic experiences through courses in statistics, which are often among the worst taught courses, or by being forced to conduct a traditional experimental design study for their doctoral thesis even if they had interest in other kinds of research. But the world is becoming ever more data oriented. "Knowledge is power" goes the old saying. These days so is information and data.

• Better than slipping info into newsletters is **inducing people into your schools to really see what's going on**. Other poll data indicate that the more frequently and more recently people visit or have visited a school, the more favorable the attitude is likely to be. And a long term visit is better than a short tour. Berliner at Arizona State University induced some Phoenix-area business people to shadow principals for several days. The experience, says, Berliner, blew them away. They were amazed at the number and complexity of decisions that had to be made, the openness of a principal to contact from teachers, parents and kids (CEOs are often protected by secretaries, administrative assistants and flacks). I have heard, but cannot confirm first hand the Honeywell's CEO, James Rainier, attained his enlightened opinion of the schools through such an experience.

Of course, the visit has to be open. Nothing can destroy a school or a system faster than giving people, especially journalists, an impression that you're hiding something. Journalist sniff a lack of candor the way lions sniff ailing zebras, often with the same outcome.

• **School visits by journalists are perhaps even more important than those of parents or business people**. This it true, even though some think journalism isn't what it used to be. -In the "Fourth Bracey Report," I cite former *Washington Post* ombudsman Richard Harwood to this effect[20]. Harwood wrote that content analyses find that between 70% and 90% of the content of articles are merely what the journalists were told by the people being reported on. In a similar vein, veteran pundit David Broder observed that journalists used to be out siders, but now were too close to the people they write about, and that the American public had come to see this and to distrust journalists.

Still, getting the attention of reporters can be crucial. In 1991, *The Rocky Mountain News*, which no one ever accused of being a friend of public schools, sent a reporter to observe a team-taught middle school class in Aurora, Colorado, adjacent to Denver. The reporter spent several weeks with the teachers in a school that was 28% minority, 50% working class and about 50% towards low income families. Not a school of *Savage Inequalities*, but not affluent either.

The reporter's opening sentence of a three-part series began "Donna Beck and

Toni Lyman sure love to teach. Too bad things keep getting in the way." There then followed a litany of social and personal problems that the teachers had to deal with before they could consider teaching. The series, while not obscuring the very real problems in the classroom, was sympathetic to what the teachers were up against and how well they coped with it[21].

Firsthand experience with something in the schools often leads to a vastly different perspective than secondhand knowledge. When I was director of testing for the State of Virginia, the legislature enacted a minimum competency test requirement for high school graduation. Just before the first administration of the test, I invited all the media in the state to send reporters to Richmond and take the test. Only two did. Neither got a perfect score; both wrote fair, balanced articles that expressed the view that the test was a pretty good measure of minimal skills. Elsewhere, writers of reports and editorial scoffed at how easy the test was, some implying that it amounted to consumer fraud. These pundits were somewhat taken aback when the results came out and a substantial percentage of students failed to attain the 60% score needed to pass.

The possibility of getting some favorable reportage is usually worth the risk of a reporter having a negative agenda or incompetent editors. This seems especially important when one remembers that the media accentuate the negative. One night, before giving a speech in Harrisburg, Pa., I was interviewed on the local TV news. That same day, by coincidence, a student had got caught with a gun in school (his intent was to sell it, not use it). The gun incident got six minutes of airtime; I got 90 seconds.

• **And school people should harass their state and national organizations.** I often use the David Clark, "wimps in education" quote in speeches around the country. I point out that Clark has in mind his fellow professors. But during the next break after I mention that, several administrators come up and whisper "It applies to us, too." People have taken too much too long and they haven't received the support from the national associations they should have. Fortunately, it seems to me that the leadership in at least some associations offers hope.

At some level, though, schools will always be failing and school administrators and teachers are like Sysiphus always rolling the stone up the hill. Eduction historian Henry J. Perkinson titled his book *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education*, 1865-1965. He showed that, faced with enormous social problems—city slums, desegregation, poverty, unequal opportunity—Americans chronically turn to their schools for the solution.

*Induce people to visit schools to see what's really going on.. First hand experience often leads to a vastly different perspective than that gained from secondhand knowledge.*

All schools cannot solve all the problems and thus many must look like failures. But some test scores are at record highs and so is the high school graduation rate and college attendance rate. One

would think these would be occasions for celebrations, but an institution that is asked to do everything can expect to be accused of not doing anything well.

But one has to hang in there nonetheless. Persistence is one of our most esteemed personality traits. Each time I see another negative article or more misinterpreted data, I feel disheartened. But then I think of those who worked years and years to get women the vote or to abolish segregation. Or I think of Nelson Mandela, emerging after 25 years in prison with little bitterness and much compassion to lead his nation. And I hang in there, which is made easier because, while many people have their opinions, I'm secure in the facts.

I have said and repeat here that I am a research psychologist with a great respect for data. If the data say American schools are lousy, that will be documented in "The Bracey Report." To date, though, the data say no such thing.

A lot of people have now concluded that school folk have been too passive, too accepting of the critics. I concur.

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## Gallery

Photo by Robert Finken

Memory is the editor of one's sense of life...
*Elizabeth Bowen*

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by Theodore J. Kowalski and Terry Wiedmer

# Most Superintendents Appear to be PR Passive—

## A Study of Districts in Four States Reveals a Low Priority for Public Relations

**This report indicates that nearly half of the districts in four midwestern states do not have a comprehensive approach—in policy or action—regarding public relations. In light of current criticism of American education in national media, one would think that public school officials would have developed sophisticated programs of public relations to counter their critics. But this is not the case, at least in the four states studied. For example, only 15 percent of the respondents had both a public relations policy and a program or plan of operation; 27 percent had a policy but no organized program; 42 percent had neither.**

**This study warrants special attention by state school board and school administrator association executives. Each should consider a study to determine the extent of organized communication programs (media relations, crisis plans, newsletters, recognition efforts, use of volunteers and advisory committees, etc.) in the state. Results may indicate the need and receptivity for training and development workshops for district officials.**

The existence of organized public relations programs in schools is usually verified by the presence of certain conditions such as a policy, and implementation plan, and/or personnel assignments. Formal action by the school board is one way to assure that administrators will be encouraged to develop and carry out planned public relations programs.[1] Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher[2] describe having a written policy as the first and essential step to legitimizing the process.

Effective and comprehensive programs are also characterized by implementation plans. According to West,[3] these plans set fourth the organization's values and beliefs, identify key goals and objectives, provide both structure and strategy, detail personnel responsibilities, and create a program evaluation model.

Although contemporary textbooks outline the purposes and components, they provide little or no information about the presence of public relations policies and plans among school districts. Few research efforts have examined the degree to which comprehensive programming is occurring; however, the limited information often suggests that there may be a significant gap between the "ideal" and the "real." That is to say, most administrators and school board members express support for public relations, but far fewer actually take steps to implement organized programs.

Consider two studies conducted in midwestern states in the last 15 years. The first involved perceptions of school administrators in Indiana in the late 1970s. While 80% of those surveyed said their boards were interested in public relations, only 25% said that funds had been earmarked for this purpose.[4] Findings of a second study, conducted in Wisconsin in the 1980s, were that a number of districts had failed to establish policies on critical elements of public relations, such as press relations.[5]

More recently, a study of 112 school districts in southeastern Pennsylvania revealed that most had neither a formal policy nor a

formal evaluation system for public relations programs. Just under 40% had a policy, and the vast majority relied on informal parent and staff surveys to determine the effectiveness of school and community relations efforts.[6]

In general, however, little is known about the degree to which school districts have taken steps to institutionalize the public relations process. Perhaps even less in known about: 1, the frequency with which districts use common elements of public relations (e.g., press releases, newsletters), and 2, the degree to which programs are being modified because of technology and reform. As America moves further away from its traditional manufacturing base and closer to a service society dependent on the generation and use of information, this lack of knowledge about school public relations practices becomes critical.

### *A Study of Midwestern States*

In an effort to expand the knowledge base of practices in school public relations, the authors conducted a study of superintendents in four midwestern states. Data were collected during the 1993-94 school year.

### *Description of the Sample*

Surveys were sent to 50 superintendents in each of four states: Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Random selection was accomplished by using directories supplied by the four state departments of education. There was no attempt to stratify the sample according to district size, location within the state, and so forth. A total of 168 completed surveys were returned, constituting an 84% return rate.

Six demographic variables were included in the survey. Four pertained to the school districts in which the superintendents were employed and two focused on the superintendents themselves. Those in the former category included the state in which the district was located, a description of the community in which the school district was located, the total pupil enrollment of the district, and the frequency of school board meetings. Outcomes for these items are found in Tables 1 to 4.

**Table 1**
Distribution of Participating School Districts by States

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | State Return Rate | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State | Illinois | 37 | 74% | 22.0% |
| | Indiana | 48 | 98% | 28.6% |
| | Minnesota | 41 | 82% | 24.4% |
| | Wisconsin | 42 | 84% | 25.0% |
| | Total | 168 | 84% | 100.0% |

**Table 2**
Distribution of Participating School Districts by Description of Community Setting

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Community | Small City/Town | 59 | 35.1% |
| | Rural | 39 | 23.2% |
| | Suburban | 48 | 28.6% |
| | Urban | 19 | 11.3% |
| | No Response | 3 | 1.8% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

**Table 3**
Size of School Districts

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| District | <1,500 | 44 | 26.2% |
| | 1,500-3,999 | 61 | 36.3% |
| | 4,000-6,999 | 22 | 13.1% |
| | 7,000> | 41 | 24.4% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

**Table 4**
Average Number of School Board Meetings Per Month

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency of Meetings | 1 per month | 73 | 43.5% |
| | 2 per month | 83 | 49.3% |
| | 3 per month | 4 | 2.4% |
| | >3 per month | 6 | 3.6% |
| | No response | 2 | 1.2% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

Although it may appear that there is an unusually high number of small districts involved in the study, one should keep in mind that in these four states most school systems have enrollments of fewer than 4,000 students. Additionally, these states have a majority of school systems that would be characterized as small city or rural districts—and this condition was evident in the districts randomly selected for participation.

More than half of the superintendents responding had doctoral degrees. A national study conducted by Glass[7] found that just over one-third (36%) of all superintendents had doctoral degrees; thus, the representation of superintendents in this study with doctoral degrees was much higher than the national average.

### *Public Relations Programming*

Many facets of public relations go beyond the dissemination of information and promotional activities. For example, collecting and analyzing needs assessment data is often viewed as part of this broad administrative function. The most commonly recognized components, however, continue to be those that are designed to keep the general community informed. Eight items in the survey either directly or indirectly related to the current level of programming.

### *Policy and Plans*

As noted earlier, indications of whether the public relations process is an integral aspect of the overall management of schools are the presence of a written school board policy and a written plan for program implementation. The superintendents were asked if either or both were in existence in their districts. The results are contained in Table 5.

**Table 5**
Presence of a Written Plan or Policy for Public Relations

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plan or Policy for Public Relations | Yes, a Plan | 26 | 15.4% |
| | Yes, a Policy | 46 | 27.4% |
| | Yes, Both | 25 | 14.9% |
| | No | 70 | 41.7% |
| | No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

A high number, nearly 42%, indicated that they had neither a plan nor a policy. This outcome indicates that nearly half of the districts approach public relations informally.

The superintendents were also asked if they had a plan and/or policy outlining how communications with the media would be handled in the event of an emergency or crisis. Results for this item are contained in Table 6.

**Table 6**
Presence of a Written Plan or Policy for Communicating with the Mediain the Event of an Emergency or Crisis

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plan or Policy for Emergency/ Crisis | Yes, a Plan | 59 | 35.1% |
| | Yes, a Policy | 29 | 17.3% |
| | Yes, Both | 23 | 13.7% |
| | No | 53 | 31.5% |
| | No response | 4 | 2.4% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

Nearly one-third of the superintendents in Indiana (35%), Minnesota (32%), and Wisconsin (30%) reported having neither a plan nor policy; yet only 16% of those in Illinois reported the same condition. Conversely, a significantly higher percent of superintendents in Illinois (41%) reported having both a plan and policy for this purpose, whereas only 23% in Wisconsin, 17% in Indiana, and 12% in Minnesota reported the same condition.

### *Staff Responsibility for Public Relations*

The survey inquired as to who handled public relations. The response choices and results are presented in Table 7. Very few districts used the services of an outside consultant for public relations, and about one in five indicated that no one was responsible for a public relations program.

**Table 7**

Responsibility for the Public Relations Function

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who is Responsible | Superintendent | 51 | 30.4% |
| | Another Administrator | 75 | 44.6% |
| | Consultant | 5 | 3.0% |
| | No One | 35 | 20.8% |
| | No response | 2 | 1.2% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

One might expect to find differences in the responses for this item based on school district enrollments, i.e., larger districts are more likely to have public relations specialists. Although districts over 7,000 were slightly more likely to have the public relations function assigned to a member of the administrative staff than were smaller districts, comparisons across the four enrollment groups (see Table 3) were not statistically significant.

### *Dissemination of Information*

Several questions in the survey pertained to the preparation and distribution of information items. The first pertained to newsletters, and the results are found in Table 8.

**Table 8**

Frequency of Producing Community Newsletter

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fequency of Production | Monthly | 46 | 27.4% |
| | Semi-Annually | 46 | 27.4% |
| | Annually | 18 | 10.7% |
| | Never | 25 | 14.9% |
| | No response | 33 | 19.6% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

Nearly 20% of the superintendents did not respond to this item. Just over one out of four districts published newsletters on a monthly basis. There was no significant variation across the four states nor did school district enrollment appear to be a factor affecting this item.

Another means for communicating with the general public is to have regularly scheduled radio or television programs. In this information age, there is a great deal of speculation that organizations are moving away from print material when communicating with patrons. Results here did not support this view. Nearly three out of four school districts had neither a regularly scheduled radio program or television program. Complete results for this item are found in Table 9.

**Table 9**

Regularly Scheduled Information Radio and Television Programs

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Regular Radio and/or TV Programs | Yes, Radio | 16 | 9.5% |
| | Yes, Television | 16 | 9.5% |
| | Yes, Both | 11 | 6.6% |
| | No | 124 | 73.8% |
| | No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

The largest school systems, i.e., those over 7,000 in enrollment, were slightly more likely to have such programs.

The superintendents were also asked how often they had prepared news releases over the past three years. The response choices and results are contained in Table 10.

**Table 10**
Frequency of News Releases in Past Three Years

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency of News Releases | Frequently | 89 | 53.0% |
| | Occasionally | 56 | 33.3% |
| | Rarely | 20 | 11.9% |
| | Never | 2 | 1.2% |
| | No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

Clearly, many school districts rely on news releases to distribute information. Only two districts in the sample reported having never used news releases.

The next information-related item focused on the production of pamphlets, brochures, and/or other related materials in the last three years. Such materials are often produced to inform present and potential patrons. Results for this item are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11**
Preparation of Promotional Pamphlets/Brochures for Current and Potential Patrons Over the Last Three Years

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Degree to which Print Materials were Prepared | Extensively | 48 | 28.6% |
| | Moderately | 77 | 45.8% |
| | Very Limited | 36 | 21.4% |
| | Not at All | 7 | 4.2% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

District enrollment made somewhat of a difference with respect to this question. Of the seven superintendents reporting never preparing such materials, six came from districts with enrollments below 1,500 and the remaining one came from a district with an enrollment between 1,500 and 3,999.

The final information-related item explored the extent to which school district officials over the past three years had prepared visual materials (e.g., video tapes) describing school programs for patrons. The response options and results are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12**
Preparation of Visual Promotional Materials for Current and Potential Patrons Over the Last Three Years

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Degree to which Visual Materials were Prepared | Extensively | 13 | 7.7% |
| | Moderately | 46 | 27.4% |
| | Very Limited | 58 | 34.5% |
| | Not at All | 50 | 29.8% |
| | No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

School districts in the smallest enrollment category, i.e., those below 1,500 students, were less likely to produce visual materials or to produce them as frequently as larger districts.

### *Plans for Expansion*

The superintendents were asked if they had plans to expand their efforts in the area of public relations. Slightly less than one out of three expressed definite intentions in this regard. Results are found in Table 13.

School districts in the smallest enrollment category, those below 1,500 students, were the least likely to have future plans to expand programming. Only slight variations were found among the other three enrollment categories.

**Table 13**
Plans to Expand Public Relations Efforts in the Future

| Category | Response Options | Number of Responses | Percent of All Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Expansion of PR Efforts | Definitely Plan to Expand | 49 | 29.2% |
| | Somewhat Plan to Expand | 73 | 43.5% |
| | No Plan to Expand | 28 | 16.7% |
| | Uncertain | 17 | 10.1% |
| | No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| | Total | 168 | 100.0% |

***Summary***

The purpose of this study was to generate information that would broaden the information base related to school district public relations initiatives.

In general, the results of this study indicate considerable variations exist among school districts in four midwestern states with regard to using public relations. Consider these research outcomes:

- A high number of school districts, 42%, do not have a plan or policy directing public relations activities.
- More than one out of three of the districts (35%) do not have a plan or policy for communicating with the media in the event of an emergency or crisis.
- Approximately one out of five of the districts have no one—not even the superintendent—designated as being responsible for public relations.
- Approximately 15% of the districts never publish a newsletter, and another 38% do so only once or twice a year.
- Nearly three out of four districts (74%) do not have regularly scheduled radio or television programs.
- Only 28% of the districts reported extensive efforts in preparing printed promotional materials (pamphlets, brochures), and only 8% reported extensive efforts in preparing visual promotional materials (video tapes).
- The most widely used public relations technique identified in the study is the issuance of news releases. Slightly more than half of the superintendents indicated that this was done frequently in their districts, while only two superintendents said they never issued such releases.

Despite these indications that many school districts are doing little in the public relations arena, superintendent projections for the future are only somewhat promising. Within the context of an information society where public relations is growing in importance, only about one out of three superintendents expressed a definite plan to expand programs.

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## Gallery

Photo by Terry Wild

The things taught in schools and colleges are not an education but the means of education....
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

by David Sandler

# Bond and Budget Battles

## Dos and Don'ts to Avoid Being Defeated

Some view it as a necessary civic duty. Others see it as a major battle over what is best for children. Regardless of your perspective, plunging into the budget and bond referendum wars is not for the fainthearted.

I have had the opportunity to work with several New Jersey boards of education on school budgets and bond referendums. My first experience was as a communications specialist for a mid-size school district in central New Jersey and I am currently president of a school communications firm. My responsibilities range from low profile work such as preparing newsletters and brochures, to duties that include video productions, use of cable television, coordinating media relations and get-out-the-vote strategies.

There is no magic formula for passing a spending plan, but I do have some ideas that have worked and resulted in passage of a budget or referendum. On the other hand, I have been involved in campaign approaches that I have since learned will surely result in a budget or referendum defeat.

I am writing this in the hope that the next time your board of education considers asking taxpayers for even more money than they're already paying, you can take advantage of some of the lessons I have learned from past bond referendum and budget campaigns.

*Lesson Learned #1*: If your board is unable to reach unanimous agreement on a spending plan, regroup and develop another approach before bringing your proposal to the voters.

A board of education must be united-if not in spirit, at least in votes-when it comes to matters of the pocketbook. Therefore, a 9-0 vote on a spending plan is mandatory. Even an abstention (unless it's for legal reasons) is unacceptable. A unanimous vote sends a strong message to voters that their elected or appointed officials believe in the spending plan being advanced.

Since boards of education usually consist of philosophically and socioeconomically diverse individuals, your board represents an excellent meter for judging how a particular spending plan will be received by the community. If your board is experiencing rough sledding in trying to reach consensus, you will most certainly find similar pockets of resistance in your community. Consequently, a spending plan born in adversity will most likely result in defeat.

*Lesson Learned #2*: You are in trouble if there are old wounds outstanding in the community that have never healed-or at least been properly addressed.

Voters like to send a message. If you have issues that the public is still angry over, often a bond referendum or budget vote is used as a way to send a message to the board.

Here are a few examples of board actions that will result in message votes:

- You have recently instituted a redistricting program that many community members have not embraced.
- You sold a school, a transaction that didn't sit well with the community, particularly those who attended the school when they were children.
- You eliminated courtesy busing and, as a result, have provoked many parents (typically your most supportive group) living along the

discontinued routes.

• You have bypassed the voters and gone lease-purchase on anything within the last five years.

While your board undoubtedly had sound reasons for doing what it did, and had the best interests of the school system and community at heart, one must remember that the road to defeat may be paved with the best of intentions. In short, if your community feels mistreated or perceives itself as having been shut out of the decision-making process, the air must be cleared before going to the voters.

Put bluntly, your community needs a chance to vent. People need at least one organized public meeting (and possibly more depending on how sticky the situation has become) set up solely to discuss the issue at hand. Right or wrong, the public needs an opportunity to tell board members face to face how shortsighted they've been in what has been perceived as a severe miscalculation that either effected their children, their pocketbook or their sense of fair play.

While you're calling the meeting primarily to give the community its turn to tell you a thing or two, that doesn't mean you can't respond. Just don't be defensive. Establish some ground rules for discussion, serve refreshments, sit in a circle and talk. In the end, you may agree to disagree with some people. But at least you have provided members of the community an opportunity to have their say, probably diffused a potentially negative message vote, perhaps made a new friend or two, and most important, empowered the community to turn the page and get on to the next issue.

*There's no magic formula for gaining approval of your district's spending plan; but some techniques work better than others.*

*Lesson Learned #3*: If you go head to head with a pressure group, you lose.

You can't fight pressure groups, which are usually formed because you haven't followed Lesson Learned #2. Pressure groups generally consist of citizens who believe in a most visceral way that the board is trying to hoodwink taxpayers into spending more money on schools than is warranted. Such groups usually think the board is already wasting taxpayer funds to begin with, so asking for additional expenditures adds insult to injury.

It has been my experience that pressure groups are almost impossible to defeat. Even if you overcome the obstacles a pressure group presents and pass a budget or referendum, the residual illwill can never serve anyone's long-term interests.

A well-organized pressure group can accentuate the negatives, distort tax implications, disseminate scurrilous information and play the media like a fiddle.

If you were truly in a political campaign, you could counter these assaults with your own brand of negative campaigning which to date, at least, has worked for most politicians. You are not, however, in a political campaign. You are a board of education whose primary concern is doing what's right for children in your schools. As a result, you must always take the high road in your dealings with pressure groups. Although staying out of the mud is admirable, it is not a particularly effective strategy for countering misinformation and poison pen letters to the editor.

Avoid this problem by heading off pressure groups before they get started. In addition to heeding Lesson Learned #2, you must work to build a productive relationship with pressure group leaders. You must get these people to

your meetings (even if it means direct invitation), get yourself invited to speak at their meetings and allow them to become genuinely involved in the budget planning or bond referendum process. This outreach may not sway them to your way of thinking, but you will most likely reduce the heat simply because you can do more person-to-person talking. It's much harder for a pressure group to rally against people they have sat down to coffee with, than it is to rail against a board of education that can only be reached by standing behind a podium at a formal public meeting for a limited period of time.

*Lesson Learned #4*: Concentrate on getting out the positive votes.

While the natural tendency is to try and gain the support of the entire community, the reality is you only need to win by one vote to get approval to proceed. Therefore, concentrate your time and resources primarily on voters who tend to support budgets and referendums.

It's no secret that the voters who perceive a direct benefit from a school district's passage of a budget or referendum are those with children in school. Reaching these parents is relatively easy. Working through the Parent Teacher Organization or Parent Teacher Association is always an effective way to inform parents with children in school. Often a volunteer base to help inform the community can be developed through these organizations.

But there is a danger in taking this voting group for granted. While parents of children in school will generally be supportive, the number who actually come out to vote on election day will vary greatly depending on how good a job you do in creating genuine excitement and providing concrete information about your program.

And while you're at it, don't forget about the preschool parents, the future beneficiaries of your spending plan. Since preschool parents are typically out of the school information loop, they need a wake-up call about why the upcoming vote is important to them. Make some presentations to preschool parents and be sure to send them information geared specifically to their concerns.

While parents with children in school are your strongest constituency, do not totally write off residents without children in school as negative voters. These people once had children in the schools or may have grandchildren currently attending. Granted, these so called "empty-nesters" may not perceive a direct benefit, and in fact, may only perceive an increase in taxes as the result of voting yes. Yet it is still your responsibility to try to help them understand that voting to approve the budget or referendum is a vote for the greater good. And, in addition to securing the future of the community's children by supporting your spending plan, it's important to emphasize for the empty-nesters the increase in property values all homeowners enjoy in a community where budgets and referendums are supported.

While easier said than done, getting some representative empty-nesters and senior citizens involved in developing the budget and referendum planning at the beginning of the process earns goodwill, some support and often less resistance. This doesn't mean you're going to carry the senior citizen or empty-nester vote. And, since these people are not your natural constituency, you should spend proportionally less time seeking their vote. However, there are pockets of support here that you may very well need come election day which should be tapped.

*Lesson Learned #5*: Don't expect newspapers to carry the information ball for you.

Take your responsibility to communicate with the public seriously. If you are expecting your local papers to cover meetings and write about what a great plan you've developed, you

will be extremely disappointed.

The newspaper is there to report the facts and sometimes that's asking a lot. Additionally, the slightest hint of opposition or controversy will almost certainly be highlighted so reporters can honor their "two sides to every story" sensibilities.

So, your board must take responsibility for informing the community about what you are doing. Most people do not respond well to a hastily drafted newsletter or brochures written in educational jargon and filled with technical data. You must provide clear information to your community to fulfill your obligation to help people understand what they are getting for their multimillion dollar investment.

Printed material, while effective and necessary, is not the only means of communication. Producing a professional video is an under used communication tool that can prove very useful. A picture is worth a thousand words; and through a video, you can show the problems your district is experiencing (overcrowded library or cafeteria) while simultaneously highlighting the positive aspects of your school system. We live in a visual age and videos provide a visual newsletter for the community. Win or lose, you will generate goodwill as most citizens will appreciate this effort to inform.

The greatest challenge to passing budgets and bond referendums is the board of education's ability to communicate the school district's needs in personal, public and visual ways. Good communication does not ensure victory at the polls. But it does mean a board of education is fulfilling its obligation to inform the voters. Ultimately, an informed public will make positive decisions about education in its community.

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"I wonder how much the district is saving on school buses?"

Case Study

# ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY—

## A superintendent who believes wholeheartedly in community involvement doesn't realize his zeal overwhelms his planning.

by Philip T. West

Brad Nale, the new superintendent of the Filbert Independent School District, the home of the Tidewater (gridiron) Alligators, believed that every school district should be one big happy family. Unfortunately, his predecessor had behaved differently. Consequently, Nale inherited administrators and staff thoroughly entrenched in their reclusive shells, forced there by their former superintendent, Haney Shones, whose firm belief was "out of sight-out of trouble."

Haney had promoted a low profile while ruling his roost with a heavy hand during his long tenure at Filbert. He stayed out of community business, and the citizens of the small city of Tidewater avoided his. In fact, he resided about 30 miles away and his private and professional life was rarely a discussion topic among Tidewater community members. All they knew about their superintendent was that school taxes were low, much to their satisfaction.

During his tenure of some 20 years, only one new building was constructed despite a rapidly growing population, and this was seven years ago, before the new highway connecting Tidewater to Central City was built. The new building housed junior high students, and to handle the increasing number of elementary school pupils within the district, he had brought in portable buildings. Since the district's climate was relatively mild throughout the year, no one seemed to mind that students had to go outdoors frequently or that their classes weren't held in the main building. Cheaper might not be better, some of the townspeople would declare, but it certainly put less strain on their already overworked pocketbooks.

Because housing was appreciably less expensive the farther it was from Central City, most of the teachers also lived further beyond Tidewater. While some lived quite near the district, in the adjoining town of Marsh Malor, more traveled greater commuting distances than their superintendent. Along with the few teachers who did reside in the district, the secretaries, clerks, custodians and bus drivers were all long-time Tidewater dwellers.

Superintendent Brad Nale, friend to all, immediately began to change this situation. In less than three months, the out-of-towners were wishing that they lived next door to the schools where they taught. By reactivating long dormant PTAs and involving parents in their schools, he created activities in each school that kept most the teachers working late one or two nights a week. The fact that so many parents were interested in participating in school activities surprised the teachers. In the past, few had attended the district's Back-To-School Night. Now parents were banging on the doors, and the new superintendent was greeting them with a smile and a handshake.

A host of extra-curricular activities initiated by Nale added to their surprise and unexpected burden. Generally, most students could not wait to rush the door when school was over for the day. Now, like their parents, flocks of students were seeking involvement. As a consequence, no longer could the teachers follow the students out the door at 3:30 p.m., as they had been doing during Haney Shones' waning tenure, or play bridge and chat in the faculty lounges while they waited for 4:10 p.m., the time their day was officially completed. Instead, as sponsors of various activities, they

## Case Study

had to spend these 40 minutes working with students. This meant a late start on a highway that was more crowded daily, where 30 miles after 4:30 p.m. could often take more than an hour to drive because of industrial commuter traffic.

For a time, the reclusive teachers found it rough going. Then, as they gradually became adjusted to Nale's "New Deal," the superintendent suddenly expanded his notion of family with the creation of a volunteer corps that invaded nearly every nook and cranny of the schools. There were parent volunteers in classroom libraries, offices and cafeterias, including the kitchens. Because the schools had not yet formalized a training program for these volunteers, they inadvertently encroached upon what the teachers considered inviolate: classroom instruction.

Some of the volunteers, having as much education as the teachers they assisted, viewed themselves as qualified as the instructors and occasionally dominated their classrooms, much to the teachers' chagrin. And when less qualified volunteers made mistakes in grading papers or scoring tests, the teachers were disastrously critical of them. The volunteers complained to the building principal, and the teachers were admonished.

Those volunteers working in school libraries, while generally helpful, sometimes objected to the appropriateness of particular texts, incurring the ire of the librarians who felt that their professionalism was being questioned. In one instance, a volunteer in the high school library complained about a text to the board of education. The board turned the matter over to Nale who approached the librarian with the problem. The librarian reacted by threatening to quit. When the superintendent backed off, the complaining volunteer proceeded to form an independent citizens' advisory committee to evaluate all the library holdings in the district.

In the middle of the year, the librarian did resign and the independent citizens' advisory committee demanded to be involved in the replacement selection. Nale acceded to the demand believing that the best of all possible worlds was still to involve everyone—only in this way would his ideal of "one big happy family" be fulfilled.

Meanwhile, the junior and senior high school students were becoming about as unhappy as their teachers. The cafeteria volunteers were exceedingly effective, taking their jobs quite seriously. There, the students who were often able to elude the eyes of their teachers were never out of sight to the volunteers. The teachers, in this case, were delighted to be relieved of cafeteria duty and applauded the supervisory efforts of the volunteers.

However, when one of the volunteers, Sue Adams, severely shook a student who had thrown some food at her, the boy's parents quickly descended on the principal and superintendent, threatening a lawsuit and phoning the board president to reinforce the seriousness of their intent. Nale's one big happy family became extremely unhappy. The high school principal admonished Adams and relieved her of her responsibilities. She then made it a point to complain about the ineffectiveness of the district's administration to everyone who knew or would listen to her.

Volunteers were also in the offices in the schools throughout the district, helping clerical staff in numerous ways. A few created some problems in not following office procedures with the phone and relaying messages. For example, little phone answering ever took place at one elementary school because its office volunteer was always on the phone making personal calls. Unfamiliar with the filing system, yet asked to file papers and documents, some of the volunteers guessed and frequently misfiled these items. A few also spent more time reading a file's contents than they did putting it away. When the head secretary at the high school

complained about one of the volunteers to the principal, Darby Edwards, and she confronted the volunteer, he was so indignant that he quit immediately. In leaving, he was reputed to have grumbled to another volunteer, "What do they want for nothing!"

Some volunteers, assigned to work with one teacher, would suddenly drop in on the classrooms of other teachers to satisfy their curiosity. This was particularly true when laughing was heavy or students were loud in a class. The teachers, who believed their privacy was being invaded, complained to their principals who in turn went to Superintendent Nale. But he seemed too busy with his next project to pay heed to the complaints.

Nale was making trips to the heart of the city to talk with local business people about his idea to start an Adopt-A-School program. At a Rotary luncheon, he explained his proposal to about two dozen business people, all of whom responded exceedingly well to the idea. Arthur A. Moore, for example, owner of the city's largest furniture stores, immediately adopted one of the elementary schools. Other businesses followed his lead and eventually all of the schools were adopted.

In organizing his program, Nale instituted a school-business partnership committee that was to meet regularly to oversee the adopt-a-school program. But attendance at these meetings was poor because of the demanding schedules of the proprietors.

Moore's school, Shane Elementary, received a dozen new computers for student use. The teachers were happy, the principal was delighted, and Superintendent Nale was ecstatic. Moore's business rival presented his school with a 100-inch projection television set, eliciting the same kind of response from all concerned. However, as if to watch over his investment, Moore began spending inordinate amounts of time at Shane Elementary School, mainly observing how the teachers were using his donated computers. But later, he began observing all of the teachers and even the principal.

*...the superintendent suddenly expanded his notion of family with the creation of a volunteer corps that invaded nearly every nook and cranny of the schools.*

Because he was semi-retired and his son was running the family store, he was quickly becoming a permanent fixture in the school. The principal, Frank Dubois, found himself spending a large part of his day responding to questions leveled at him by the store owner. Moore wanted to know everything about the school—its curriculum, teachers and so forth. Dubois, not wanting to offend his school's benefactor, tolerated the situation with a forced smile. But when complaints from his teachers began to flow in, he broached the problem as kindly as he could to Moore.

Learning that his future access to classrooms was to be limited, Moore stated that he no longer wanted anything to do with his adopted school. Feeling betrayed by ingratitude, he rued the day he had donated the computers. When this episode was related to Nale later, he became livid about the situation and told Dubois as much. By the time the superintendent left the principal's office, Dubois was just about ready to leave his forever.

But Moore, while reneging on his school adoption agreement, did not give up the idea of involvement in the schools. Devoting about the same amount of time he had spent each day at the school to the school-business partnership

## Case Study

committee (that Nale had come to view as a work of art waiting to be appreciated), Moore gathered his colleagues to meet regularly in the absence of the superintendent. The consensus resulting from these meetings was that if the schools were to be truly effective, the local business people—not the board of education—must provide the necessary leadership.

According to Moore, "The schools have been doing a poor job of preparing students for jobs in business and industry." One businesswoman agreed, "The young people applying for work at my place often can't even read our catalogue." Another business colleague went further

"The same thing is true in my factory. They can't read directions—I guess, they just can't read!" That meeting ended on a note of reform. Adoption now meant change. Meanwhile, Superintendent Nale was off to his next project: interesting the senior citizens in the schools.

Many senior citizens in the community were active in their own organization, meeting to plan social functions or service to the community projects. But rarely had they gathered to discuss an issue. Nale addressed the group in a rather lengthy speech, speaking of how each and all were needed in the schools, how their experiences represented invaluable community assets, how the teachers and students would welcome them into the classroom as guest speakers, and how they could help out in many other ways as well.

His audience paid close attention, and as a body enthusiastically offered their assistance. The following week, a few of them were already in the classrooms sharing their expertise with students and teachers. By now though, many of the teachers had become less than willing to have a growing number of volunteers in their classes. So when the eager senior citizens suddenly appeared on the scene, they did not receive the welcome they were promised by Nale. Given the cold shoulder by teachers and some disrespect from the students (who were becoming increasingly inattentive, disruptive and prone to misbehavior), Carol Standard, chair of the senior citizen group and guest speaker for the period, had so many rude interruptions before she had finished talking that she vowed never to return.

*Learning that his future access to classrooms was to be limited, Moore stated that he no longer wanted anything to do with his adopted school.*

Because so many of her colleagues were treated with similar disdain, she chose the school system as the agenda topic of their next meeting. During this meeting, the senior citizens compared the schools of today to those of their own time, and concluded that good citizenship was obviously not something being taught in the schools, nor was respect for one's elders. They decided that their schools had better change, and change quickly, or else the district would never again have their support.

Superintendent Nale knew nothing of the senior citizens' problems in schools. He was totally convinced that nothing could go wrong when every moment of one's time was invested in making the school and community one big happy family. He told the board as much, while at the same time inviting those members into the schools.

"You should see all the great things happening in the schools, you would be even prouder of your school district than you are now," Nale enthused.

Prompted by the superintendent's excitement, members decided to begin visiting classrooms in the district, Not having been informed by Nale of this possibility, both principals and teachers were in a cold sweat when board members began taking advantage of the superintendent's invitation. Before the week ended, the teachers were complaining to the principals and the principals to Nale. But the CEO was undaunted. "True involvement never did run smoothly" was his motto.

*Not having been informed by Supt. Nale of the possibility, both principals and teachers were in a cold sweat when board members began taking advantage of Nale's invitation to "see all the great things happening in the schools."*

While Nale was planning his next strategy, the presidents of all the PTAs were assembling to meet with him. They were dissatisfied with the articulation between the elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. A committee of one of the PTAs had detected curricula redundancies. Potential school dropouts and misbehaving students also seriously concerned them. At the same time, the business people were demanding greater accountability in school expenditures; a back to the basics approach in teaching reading, writing and arithmetic; and a computer literate program.

Meanwhile, the school volunteers were claiming a fair share in the school district's decision making process. Ill-defined job descriptions coupled with a lack of clear authority frustrated any efforts they made to perform well. At the same time, the senior citizen group was clamoring for a resurgence of student citizenship and respect for others, and many of the district's teachers were reevaluating their career agenda, longing for better pastures. By the time the board became aware of all the trouble brewing, Nale was off to Dresden State University to see if he could coax the teaching staff into his one big happy family.

When he returned in the school van, a group of professors anxious to conduct research within the district accompanied him. As they approached the district central office, the professors observed what they thought was a welcoming committee. Their delight dissipated quickly however, when they saw the faces of the people gathered there. The only thing missing from the scene was a rope.

But Nale saw only his one big happy family, even as he was rushed into the building by the harried president of the school board, Doris Bailey, as she blurted, "We've got to do something and fast! Don't you know what's going on?" But the response she received was simply, "Everything is going to be just fine. It's only going to take a little more planning." Unfortunately, what this planning might entail was something he had not yet considered.

Philip T. West is a professor of educational administration at Texas A&M University.

## Gallery

Photo by Shirley Haley

A child is an island of curiosity surrounded by
a sea of question marks...
*Anon*

## Case Study Response

# A Superintendent with an Unplanned Mission Fails

by Carol Logan Patitu

Brad Nale may have been thinking "one big happy family" when he accepted the superintendency of the Filbert Independent School District, but instead, he was creating "one big mad family."While he saw his mission as noble and admirable, it lacked certain elements to succeed. Sound objectives normally include, but are not limited to, the following: specificity, measurability, flexibility and acceptability. For the most part, his mission excluded these essential elements.

The administration of this school district went from one extreme to another with superintendents. First, there was the "out-of-sight" policy of Haney Shones, a man who had accumulated all the power in his hands. A stingy leader with no human relations skills, he had been in office too long. Receiving a whiplash effect, the teachers and principals of Filbert Independent School District then experienced the ideas of their new CEO, "happy-go-lucky" Brad Nale, who wanted to meet the challenges facing the school district by skipping every formal management step applied to problem solving.

Brad made three main mistakes during his many escapades, causing his "broken family" to want to hang him on the spot. He did not take the time to work out the details of any of his "great ideas" ; he didn't seek comments, input, advice, or feedback from the people affected; and he leaped from one program to another without bringing closure to the previous one(s).

First, he immediately involved the students and parents in what was previously a closed, yet operable system. Brad then hastily implemented a volunteer corps—better defined as a "headache corps" by the teachers through no fault of the volunteers. The new superintendent failed to develop a step-by-step volunteer program to encompass screening and specialized training, which left the volunteers' roles, responsibilities and authority undefined. Worse yet, some advanced educated volunteers saw themselves as equals to the teachers in responsibilities and authority. And during this entire activity, the teachers and principals felt they were being ignored.

Before ironing out all the bugs in his volunteer program, Brad leaped into starting an "Adopt-A-School" program. Once again, "outsiders" were taking over; this time they were from the business community. Again, Brad erred in ignoring the complaint of a subordinate (elementary Principal Dubois) expressing instead frustration with him. The superintendent paid more attention to the concerns and complaints of the school's external constituents than he did to its internal ones. He seemed to be more interested in pleasing the public at any cost.

With two uncoordinated programs already causing chaos in the schools, Brad immediately jumped into another plan to involve senior citizens in the schools, and followed that by inviting board members to visit the classrooms without informing his principals and teachers of the possibility. And finally, he invited professors of a nearby university to conduct research in the district.

Without a doubt, Brad had great ideas, but he did not have a plan or a vision. Instead of his one big happy family, he had created a nest of enemies. He never took the time to listen to the principals and teachers to learn their comments, input, advice or feedback. He never

asked, "How do you feel about this?" Instead, he turned away from them.

Unfortunately, the board president receiving the complaint regarding a volunteer didn't take the time to investigate the situation. If she had done this, the board members could have immediately reviewed Brad's performance and provided him with feedback before his "family members" became his enemies.

Nevertheless, Brad is responsible for what did happen. He should have appointed a coordinator(s) for all of his projects, knowing that as a superintendent he would not have the time to oversee the programs. His non-participatory leadership style did not work, and will not work, in a large system. The delegation of responsibilities and authority is essential for the "one big happy family" to come into being. A coordinator would have made sure that all pieces of the puzzle were in place, including screening, training, communication, evaluation/feedback, etc.

Not only should he have used coordinators for programs, he also should have met with the principals and teachers to obtain their responses to his ideas, as well as to hear their ideas. He never considered their needs or the role they might envision for all members of the one big happy family.

Now he must start from scratch by taking the time to meet with his internal constituents—including principals and teachers—seeking their cooperation in developing goals and objectives for the school district. Their participation in the process is essential to implement the objectives and achieve the goals. Upon meeting with them, his first words should be of apology for what has already happened.

In the meantime, the board should review its superintendency hiring procedures. The type of administrator such as Brad Nale should have been deleted from the pool of candidates at the outset.

Carol Logan Patitu is assistant professor of Educational Administration at Texan A&M University.

"I do know the answer, Mr. Cole, but I have to consider peer pressure!"

## Gallery

Photo by Dale D. Gehman

A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn in hammering on cold iron...
*Horace Mann*

## Middle School Parental Involvement Is Happening

by Carl Vaupel Jr. and Mary Jane Bradley

To determine whether middle level school administrators and staff (grades 5-8) were including parents as equal partners in the educational process, a statewide survey of middle school principals was conducted in Arkansas during the fall of 1993. The survey respondents included principals from schools housing one or more grades from 5-8 and three single-grade centers.

These middle level principals were given a description of a specific public relations practice and asked to determine the frequency of that practice in four categories:

- supportive, positive home environment
- communications
- volunteering and
- advisory roles.

In the supportive, positive home environment section, sending parents flyers and memos of upcoming standardized tests and instructional tips—such as proper rest, reference materials and a specific home study area—garnered 83% of the responses in the Always/Frequently grouping. This was the highest percentage in the entire questionnaire. Fifty-four percent said that they encourage teachers to design homework that would involve parents. Only 38% of the principals provided parental workshops on topics such as nutrition, safety or preadolescent development. The lowest response in the survey was also located in this category. Just 25% reported that they had or were planning to establish a parent center. (A parent center was described as a facility or room used exclusively for parent workshops, resources, materials and meetings.)

The communications part of the survey had high frequency rates. Exactly three-fourths of the respondents encouraged teachers to send notes or make telephone calls to parents of a positive nature. A total of 73% had a planned program of sending papers and exams to parents for their review and signature. Fifty-six percent of the principals indicated that they made frequent use of a parental newsletter, while one-fourth had none. Almost half of the respondents or 48% provided teacher in-service sessions on appropriate ways to conduct parent-teacher conferences.

In the category of volunteering, the respondents preferred having the parents involved as a recreational aid (intramurals, social activities), with 69% choosing the Always/Frequently grouping. Less than half, 44%, had parents involved in instruction (tutoring, class presentations), and only 33% had them helping with clerical work (xeroxing, typing, filing).

The advisory section of the questionnaire indicated that parents served on permanent committees in 81% of the schools, while 67% involved them in temporary committee assignments. Only 46% of the respondents had established a principal's parental advisory council.

According to the data from this study, middle level school principals are involving parents in the education of their children. Of the survey's 14 public relations practices, eight received 50% or higher response rates by the participants. The schools were strongest in communication, rating three of those four public relations practices at 50% or higher, while advisory role was second highest. Of the three public relations practices in the latter category, two were rated above the 50% response rate. In the supportive, positive home environment category, two of the four practices garnered a 50% or higher response rate. The middle level schools were weakest in the volunteering category with only one of the three public relations practices receiving a 50% or higher response rate.

The need for improvements in public relation practices between middle level schools and parents does still exist. The following are suggestions for increasing public relations practices:

1. Develop parental relations awareness in the staff,
2. Create and use principal's advisory committees,
3. Provide a parent center,
4. Offer parental workshops and
5. Implement more vigorous programs in securing parental academic presentations and assistance.

This study used a Likert-scale of Always-Frequently-Rarely-Never for three of the four categories; the section concerning advisory roles directed a Yes-No decision. In reviewing the survey results, the scale was collapsed into the two most frequent responses and the two most infrequent responses. A percentage of the Always/Frequently responses and a percentage of the Rarely/Never choices were calculated. The total responses and percentages for yes and no were also figured. A total of 72 middle school principals were surveyed; 48 responded resulting in a 67% response rate.

Carl Vaupel Jr. and Mary Jane Bradley are professors of curriculum and instruction in the Department of Educational Administration at Arkansas State University.

## Project Links Parents in Homes with Elementary Campus Via Computers

**by Charles W. Simmons**

According to a recent study, thorough planning, professional support and systematic evaluation strategies are necessary to effectively implement technology intensive programs into educational systems. This study was of a project linking parents in a Central Texas community to an elementary campus in their school district via remote workstations and modems.

The hard- and software were installed during the summer of 1991, the teachers were trained in the fall, and the remote workstation sites were selected by the board in December. Parents were trained throughout February and March, and given access to the local campus network to print out their children's lesson plans or to contact school personnel via electronic mail. The project ended in June, but would have benefited from at least another year in the implementation process with the first year focusing on curriculum development and teacher training, while the second year would deal with parent training and access to the local instructional network.

The study identified six implementing stages with professional support and evaluation strategies planned for each. The stages were:

- purchasing and installation
- teacher training
- recruiting and training parents
- practicing and using the new technology skills
- evaluating and
- providing project closure for the participants.

Since computers are new tools for many teachers, training schedules for campus personnel must be based on an adequate assessment of their existing skill level and long-term, repetitive, hands-on practice time must be built into the project. The teachers in this program studied developed curriculum and then selected lesson plans from classroom workstations. The new process was a large leap away from shelf-based curriculum and lesson planning booklets.

All participants in the project stated an appreciation of the value of instructional management technology in the current setting and outside the parameters of the study. All of the parents agreed that electronic mail and access to local curriculum were significant steps toward more effective communication and parental involvement. All participants also realized the inevitability of similar technologies in the near future.

The planning for such a program should

project closure, this support should be available for anticipated needs identified through both planning and evaluating processes. Professional support is an attitude which says that the administration charged with the implementation is prepared to do whatever it takes to see that the program is successful.

The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth description of implementing intensive technology and to summatively evaluate the merit and worth of the project. These research questions were examined qualitatively:

- What were the stages of this instructional implementation?
- How does it affect the people directly and indirectly involved?
- What aspects show significant merit (show value within the study)?
- What aspects show significant worth (show value outside the parameters of this study)?
- How does access to an instructional management network affect parental attitudes toward school?
- How could an implementation of this kind be improved?
- How does what is happening in this situation relate to what is happening on a broader social context?

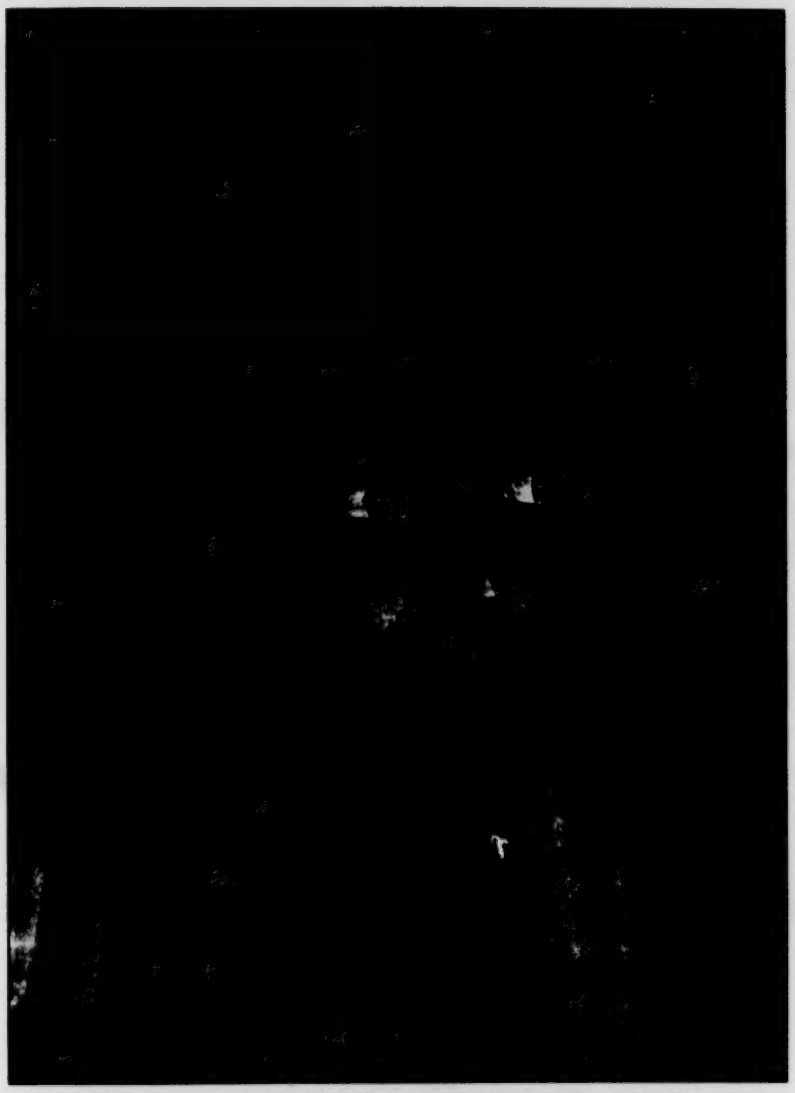
The researcher observed all stages of this implementation through 19 months. Project logs, contact sheets, training documents, informal interviews, semi-structured interviews, and a parental attitudes questionnaire were used to collect data for this study. Maximum variation sampling was used to recruit a diverse range of feedback perspectives to provide a fuller and more objective naturalistic picture.

The qualitative methodology used for this study made it possible for the researcher to identify emerging issues. The information and reported recommendations gathered from a dynamic environment can be helpful to other educators considering technology intensive implementations. The thick description of this study provides data on which the recommendations were based that can be applied to other contexts since the relationship between people and technology is similar. Those responsible for any technology intensive implementation can benefit from the primary recommendations of this study.

Charles W. Simmons, a recent recipient of a doctorate in educational administration form Texas A&M University, is assistant principal at Fry Intermediate School in Texas City, Texas.

## Gallery

Photo by Geri Kodey



A child is one who thinks that 20 cents and 20 years can scarce ever be spent...
*Benjamin Franklin*

# Book Reviews

**by Arthur W. Steller**

Books for review and requests to serve as a guest book reviewer may be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Deputy Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, 30 Carruth St., Boston, MA 02124.

**Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation.** **By Ernest Boyer. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton University Press, 3175 Princeton Pike, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648. 1991.**

Our nation's president and governors established as America's first education goal that, by the year 2000, all children would be prepared when entering the schooling system. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Ernest Boyer have prepared a seven-step agenda to reach this national goal.

Acknowledging that school readiness begins with the parents, this report recommends that each state establishes a comprehensive parent education program, each state department of education prepares a "Parent Education Guide," each community creates a preschool PTA, and that the American Library Association organizes a recommended list of books for preschoolers. Affecting these ideas is certainly possible, but the major and most important suggestion is more difficult to implement: "Every child should live in a language-rich environment in which parents speak frequently to their children, listen carefully to their responses, answer questions, and read aloud to them every day."

Ultimately, school readiness is "everybody's business." Government needs to be involved—not just with schools—but with children, for they are the future. Workplaces and neighborhoods should be child-friendly. Adults of all ages should be actively concerned with the proper raising of children.

Many reform reports are oriented towards process, procedures and power shifts. This one is outcome based, and focused upon how we could come together to accomplish one of our national educational goals.

**How to Shape Up Our Nation's Schools: Three Crucial Steps for Renewing American Education.** **By Terrel Bell and Donna Elmquist. Terrel Bell & Associates, Educational Consultants, Suite 311, Boston Building, Nine Exchange Place, Salt Lake City, UT 84111. 1991.**

During his presidential term, George Bush released his plan for restructuring and revitalizing the nation's educational system, calling for creating "New American Schools" by the year 2000. In this coauthored book, the former secretary of education, Terrel Bell, proposed that schools need to be improved immediately and that we should not wait to design new schools, as worthy a goal as that might be. He offers a three-point plan to upgrade schools for prompt action. This plan involves student motivation, parental inclusion and technology.

Unlike most school reform plans, this proposal is built upon small scale extensions of current educational practice. For example, the area of increased student motivation is basically addressed with additional student academic competitions. Most practitioners will agree with the content of this book.

**Transforming America's Schools: An Administrator's Call To Action.** **By John Murphy and Jerry Schiller. Open Court Publishing Co., LaSalle, IL. 1992.**

John Murphy is most known for his service as superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools where he lead a turnaround in student performance. With the critical need to reform schooling across the country, educators and others interested in education should follow his work and ideas. He starts with the premise that "Many students no longer come to our public schools equipped with the middle-class values of the 1940s and 1950s, and do not have the advantages that we may romantically associate with lifestyles of the past."

Teachers and principals everywhere will relate to the ideals expressed in this book, although they have been stated with elegance elsewhere. Based upon that fact, and combined with the realization that most of the specific

techniques content in this book—like effective schools—has been read in other places by this reviewer, initially there was some disappointment. This volume would have been newsworthy had it been published six to eight years ago. Nevertheless, there are many who still have an interest in learning to apply these fundamental principals, and with that in mind, Murphy's writings have merit.

**Tangled Hierarchies: Teachers as Professionals and the Management of Schools.** By Joseph Shedd and Samuel Bacharach. Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104. 1991.

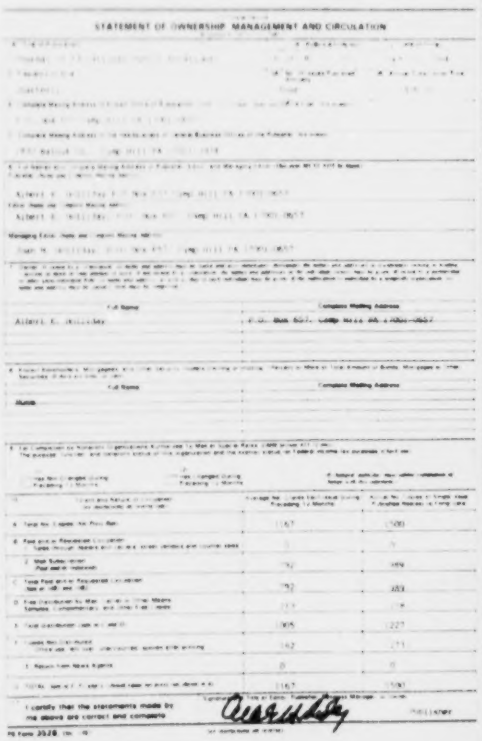
This title intrigued me, because I expected to read about the various roles throughout school hierarchies, how they were taught and how to untangle them. But in this book, the authors view school organizations mostly through the eyes of teachers (which is a bit surprising since the authors are both professors of educational administration). This is not to say that there are no references to school administrators, and some defense of beleaguered administrations.

> Bureaucracies are not the quintessential bastions of top-down control that many educational reformers paint them to be. They are the natural result when administrative superiors are compelled to rely on the discretion of subordinates to apply general principles to unique and unpredictable situations, and when superiors resort to general roles and procedures rather than specific instructions and direct supervision) to control the performance of their subordinates. Bureaucracies are the quintessential **compromises** between competing pressures for autonomy and control.

The problems are well described in this book, although the solutions are less clear because the circumstances confronting schools are so paradoxical. The authors believe the fundamental issue is as follows:

> The problems now besetting America's systems of public education require more direction *and* more control, more flexibility and more directions, more room for professional judgement *and* more ways of ensuring accountability than occur now. Systems that produce compromises between these competing sets of needs are no longer sufficient, but neither are strategies that explicitly subordinate one set of needs to the other.

The diagnosis may be correct, but where's the prescription?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# Guidelines

## *RELATIONS*-The Journal of Educational Public Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

**Scope**

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

**Style**

Scholarly articles should be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association.

We prefer citations to be numbered sequentially in the text and then detailed following the article. An author can include references of related articles/book with address of publishers—in a separate list. We accept photographs, illustrations and tables as appropriate.

**Submissions**

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657 (UPS address-1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011) 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

## Notes *(continued from inside front cover)*

### Free Presentations on SCR Topic Available

The *Journal of Educational Public Relations* began publication in 1975. In recognition of the anniversary, I am offering to provide presentations and lead workshops on the school-community relations topic during 1995 at no fee or honorarium (expenses only).

To discuss the scope of a presentation and available dates, call me at 717-761-6620.

Al Holliday
Editor-in-chief

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Cartoons in this issue are the works of Ben Sharfman (the idea) of Harrisburg, PA, and Ed King (art) of Honesdale, PA.

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# *The Holliday Report*

**Student achievement and staff productivity can be enhanced when the learning-teaching atmosphere is positive, challenging and supportive at the school, home and community levels.**

**Consider these nine elements that should exist in a district's school-community relations program:**

❒ Partnerships with outside groups that bring additional resources to bear to benefit students in the classroom or in the community.

❒ Surveys and polls that are used to learn attitudes of selected groups of people as well as to stimulate discussion about critical issues.

❒ Senior citizen involvement that leads to their contributions to enrich students' experiences and their continued support of schools.

❒ Advisory committees that stimulate a variety of people to examine an issue in depth and be in a position to recommend solutions, which will be of value to the district's decision makers.

❒ Parent involvement that leads to ongoing teacher-parent cooperation and mutual support to assist in the educational growth of students.

❒ A volunteer program that enables the use of talents of the citizenry to enrich the curriculum or aid in the delivery of educational services.

❒ Recognition of achievement that rewards students and staff (as well as others who work on behalf of schools) for their efforts and will affirm that the key to progression toward maximum quality is people.

❒ Internal relations that establish a climate of success whereby the staff and students have feelings of worth, significance and competence over important aspects of their educational experiences.

❒ Building coalitions/consensus that ensure broad based support in a community for the subjects and methods of its public school system.

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# The Journal of Educational Public RELATIONS

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Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships Vol. 16 No. 2

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## Notes From the Editor

### Who is to Blame? Parents Say - Educators Teachers Say - Parents

The debate about public education reform and restructuring is ongoing. The latest wrinkle derives from the addition, in 1994, of Goal 8—Parent Involvement—to the federal Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Goal 8 reads:

*Every School will promote partnership that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children.*

Most educators would agree that "parent involvement" is important, but the problem is that what educators consider as appropriate involvement may differ considerably from parents' concepts of the term.

Chris Pipko of the Education Commission of the States in Denver writes for *Phi Delta Kappan*. He devoted his December 1994 column to parental support of education.

From parents' point of view, he wrote, what teachers expect as involvement often "looks like an orchestrated series of one-way communication events...parents are expected to help with homework and bake sales...Questions about teaching styles or classroom practices that might exacerbate a problem or contribute to a solution receive only cursory attention."

Educators list parent involvement as one of their top priorities, Pipko suggested, but with complaints such as "Parents won't give us the support we need to do a good job. They won't even come to school for parent-teacher conferences."

Pipko wrote that "the feeling that schools [and their staffs] run roughshod over parents' opinions and ignore rather than listen to public-parent concerns seems to be at the root of current dissatisfaction with education."

I disagree with Pipko when he assumes that dissatisfaction with public education exists across the board. Recent Gallup polls, for example, provide evidence that citizens have far more favorable opinions about their local schools than they have about public education nationally, whatever that is. Gerald Bracy, in our January edition of this Journal, wrote that, "Many writers in national media continue to run gloomy reports even when they're not true... overwhelmingly, people get their national information from two sources: television and newspapers. Given the chronic complaints in these two sources, it's not surprising that people think someone, somewhere is in the throes of an education crisis. But for local schools the situation is different." Locally, citizens have access to friends, neighbors, children, school officials, teachers, and school newsletters and have ample evidence to judge whether their schools are generally effective or lacking.

What does matter is the level of knowledge the decision-makers in your school district have of attitudes of the staff and parents and possible conflicting views they may have about a desired scope and practices of parent involvement. To implement Goal 8 fully will require meetings of the minds of teachers and parents.

Allow me to refer readers to two resources on this topic.

- The National PTA (330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611-3690) has published a handy booklet, "Goals 2000: The Next Step is Yours."
- The National Association of Partners in Education (209 Madison St., Suite 401, Alexandria, VA 22314) publishes newsletters for members who favor the formation of "partnerships that ensure success for all students." The association's publication "Leadership for Change" contains an analysis of suggested strategies for each of the Goals 2000. Ask for membership information and a list of the association's resources.

Back issues of *Phi Delta Kappan* are available for $7.50 (PO Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402).

Al Holliday
Editor-in-Chief



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*Cover photo by Geri Kodey*

by Carl Leggo

# School as a Community—

## We need to accept and even celebrate the difference among students and all the staff

As a teacher, I have been a carpenter, counsellor, philosopher, janitor, nurse, servant, coach, minister, bus driver, friend, enemy, public relations spokesperson, politician, manager, librarian, cook, hallway monitor, editor, cultural critic, prophet, chaperon, parent, delivery person, textbook writer, police officer, examiner, poet, messenger, diplomat, psychologist, and expert in the Petrarchan sonnet, Euclidean geometry, the myriad conventions of comma usage, criminal and civil law, and techniques of archery and the mechanics of the cardio-respiratory system.

But the most important, as a teacher I have been a human being and a human becoming inextricably caught up in the demands, joys and failures of the human carnival. I once taught in a small rural school with a staff of eight teachers. From the distance of years and miles I remember my seven colleagues. I remember how tough the days often were. I remember the conflicts which simmered and erupted with volcanic unpredictability. I remember the keen sense of aloneness which frequently filled the air like frost.

I remember Fred, who had no difficulty making decisions. As the principal he made many decisions every day. Unfortunately Fred almost never changed his mind once he made a decision. He had unbounded confidence in his view of the world and was eager to impress his view on everybody else. Unfortunately his staff did not share his unbridled confidence or his view of the world.

I remember Herb, who had married in his early forties, and was married only two weeks when his wife told him that she had made a mistake and was going to return to her parents. I heard Herb speak about his pain only once. He opened up his heart, still raw and aching after four years.

I remember Mary, who smiled without end, even when her husband slipped into depression, her mother died and her adolescent daughter revealed she was pregnant.

I remember Tyrone, who disliked Fred. A decade ago Fred had evaluated Tyrone's performance as a teacher. The evaluation was negative. Tyrone carried the evaluation form in his briefcase and showed it to all new teachers who joined the staff.

I remember Gilbert, quiet and generous, an inveterate optimist who hoped without wavering that he would wake up the next day and find the world a happier one. He now lives on Baffin Island.

I remember Daphne, who was always polite to Fred. She wanted to please him, but Fred regarded Daphne as a millstone around his neck, an incompetent woman who only complicated his life with her ineffective classroom management skills.

I remember George, who moved through his days like an armored vehicle. People who knew George said, "He'll take care of himself," and he did.

I have sketched cameo portraits of seven teachers who worked, sometimes together, sometimes in conflict. I have purposely chronicled a litany of sad and critical experiences to highlight an observation that has astonished me and continues to astonish me. In spite of the many interpersonal conflicts, emotional crises and family catastrophes we knew as a staff

of eight teachers, we still worked with skill and dedication. We generally confronted life with courage and resolve, and we knew much success in fostering productive school experiences.

Nevertheless, now looking back at the past, far removed from the experience and the people by years and miles, I am provoked by the realization that the whole experience could have been so much better if only we had learned to work together to create and nurture a community with diversity, a community where there is an openness to contrasts and conflicts and conversation. The teachers on the staff were marked by their differences, not their similarities. We were eight strikingly different people, different in age, gender, professional accomplishments and ambitions, beliefs, personalities, backgrounds. We had almost nothing in common except we were teachers under the roof of the same school building. I remember one Christmas how we debated for three hours where to hold the Christmas staff party. Nobody wanted to host it, and nobody really wanted to attend it, but it was a tradition that had to be obeyed. As colleagues we did not trust each other. We did not respect each other. We did not listen to each other. We did not care about each other. Instead we all wanted to paint the world in our own images. We wanted everybody else to see the world our way. As teachers we were, not surprisingly, didactic. We each knew what was wise and good, and we wanted to convince everybody else, too.

What might have happened in that school if we eight teachers had learned to trust and respect one another, had learned to listen to one another and care about one another? What might have happened in that school if we eight teachers had learned to accept and even celebrate the differences among us instead of seeking an illusory unity that, even if attainable, would have served no better function than the elimination of the differences that make human communities colorful and complex?

What can be done to foster community in schools, to nurture the experience of community which is not motivated by a goal of forced unity but is generated out of the desire to celebrate diversity? We need to acknowledge one another with our eyes, making eye contact, and with smiles, with a recognition that the other person is not invisible. We need to foster caring and forgiveness and hope and respect. We need to construct new ways of seeing the world of schools. We need to share our stories. We need to relate in love.

*To live successfully in schools, all of us there must learn to embrace the paradox of community with unity, community with diversity.*

Schools need to be places where people learn to live authentically with their losses and triumphs, griefs and joys. Schools need to be places where people grow in the conviction they have value, they can help shape their worlds and they can know the pleasure of transformation, individually and communally.

To live together successfully in schools all of us — students, teachers, administrators, janitors, secretaries, resource persons — must learn to embrace the paradox of community with unity, community with diversity. By acknowledging and celebrating diversity we can create communities in which security and dignity and compassion and care are all joyfully present.

Can a school be a community of resistance? A community of interrogation? A community of struggle? A community of reflection? A

community of subversion? A community of love?

• What undermines and destroys the community? Gossip, backbiting, jealousy, lack of forgiveness, feelings of superiority or inferiority, envy, murmuring, aggression, silence, resentment, manipulation, lack of frankness, unwillingness to acknowledge the presence of the other, intolerance, obstinacy, lack of compromise, unfairness, inequity, competition, fragmentation, lack of love.

• What supports and fosters the community? Openness, forgiveness, conversation, caring, respect, inclusiveness, tolerance, commitment, interrogation, willingness to acknowledge the presence of the other's generosity, concern for others, a commitment to peace, an eagerness for celebration, praise, a recognition of people's gifts, cooperation, fairness, creativity and love.

As a teacher I am present to others in a lived experience of community. But do I live community? Do I live sharing? Do I live caring? Do I live love? These are questions I have too seldom asked. Caught up in the busyness of the school day I have been too willing to be carried through the hours/days/weeks/months/-years like a log in a strong current, a relatively passive kind of living, without actively seeking to create community in more productive ways.

Paradoxically, I promote school as a community where unity in diversity and diversity in unity are celebrated. It is possible to have diversity without unity where diversity is self-centered and individualistic and selfish, where diversity is just an explosion of personal interests leading to destruction and fragmentation. And it is also possible to have unity without diversity where unity is oppressive and life-impairing, where unity is a site of stasis, nothing done, nothing accomplished. Unity and diversity need to drive in tandem.

But this conception of community is not just going to happen. Diversity is integral to our human experience. Community will have to be created. Community doesn't just happen. It must be consciously nurtured and sustained. Just as the human body is the amalgam of many different parts which cooperate to sustain life and activity, a community must seek to be a coordinated and cooperative celebration of diverse gifts if it is going to prosper.

Schools need to be remythologized as places of carnival and extravagance and revelry where people with different voices learn to speak and sing and listen together.

Carl Leggo, a former elementary school teacher, is now an assistant professor of language education at the University of British Columbia, (2125 Main Hall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4).

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by Michell Holifield & Rob Donner

# Home Visits Offer Opportunites to Make an Excellent First Impression

**Staff of the Fox Meadow Elementary School have devised a strategy to welcome new families to the school district and community via home visits modeled after the Welcome Wagon program. The article answers five questions germane to establishing this activity that promotes parental involvement and support: Who should be visited, how newcomers can be identified, who should represent the school, how the visits can be scheduled, and what materials should be provided to the families during these visits.**

In many towns and cities, new residents are greeted within the first month by representatives of the Welcome Wagon and similar organizations. The visit is usually brief, friendly and informative. In addition, some financial advantage is established for both local businesses and the new citizen in that discount and gift coupons are given to introduce the new resident to the stores and shops who sponsor the Welcome Wagon. These aspects of the visit are designed to promote good will and make the newcomers feel at home and part of their new community.

Local schools can use the Welcome Wagon model to advantage as well. The staff at Nettleton School District's Fox Meadow Elementary School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, have experimented with the Welcome Wagon concept and found it to be productive in serving four purposes:

1 To invite and encourage parental/community involvement with the school staff.

2 To tell the school story via overviews of curriculum, student services and activities, and educational services available to the adults in the community.

3 To marshall support for the school by promoting an initial positive first or second impression.

4 To be competitive in the marketplace where school choice may be provided by law and school board policy.

Implementing such a public relations strategy requires that several questions be answered.

## Who should be visited?

At first thought and for obvious reasons, one might think only of visiting homes with school-age children. However, all citizens are potential voters, users of school facilities, participants in adult-oriented programs and services, and voluntary helpers with school programs/activities. Ideally then, all newcomers to the community should be visited. For example, a staff sincere in having community involvement in the school will value senior citizens, blue-collar workers, and business executive/proprietors even if they do not have school-age children.

## How can newcomers be identified?

The Fox Meadow staff contacted the local utility company to learn the names and addresses of new customers. Other

sources of this information are Welcome Wagon representatives, real estate sales people and the municipal office.

## Who should represent the school in such home visits?

The first visits can be made by the principal and an interested teacher. Their reports in the school newsletter and at meetings should generate a cadre of volunteers of teachers, PTA members and other community residents. A committee of the volunteers should write guidelines for the visits, specifically the basic points to be covered during the presentation, questions to anticipate, and how to establish the desired tone. For example, visitors should explain that the primary purpose of the visit is to welcome the family to the school district and the community and to encourage participation in school activities and events. (Mentioning that the visit is to solicit support for the school or to glean information about the student's family background and living conditions is obviously less than appropriate.) The Fox Meadow policy was to always have two people for each visit.

## How can the visits be scheduled?

Options are available for establishing a visitation time. A time can be established when a parent enrolls the child at school. Or, a request on school letterhead can be sent from the principal's office for a home appointment, along with a school-addressed postcard on which the parent indicates a date and time. New residents without school-aged children can be sent a similar notice in the mail or contacted by phone for an appointment. Just before making the visit at the appointed time, one of the volunteers should call ahead to ensure that that time is still valid.

## What materials/services might be useful in achieving the mission of the visit?

Questions raised in the first visits led the visit committee to put together several welcome packets, with contents varied according to the ages of the children, if any, in the resident's home. Information categories can include these:

**The School and District**

- The community newsletter, the high school newspaper, student handbook.
- Calendar of events for students, parents, school board, volunteers, citizen groups, advisory committees.
- Directory of school personnel and officers in various school-related organizations and committees.

**Community**

- An area map showing all streets and locations of major facilities such as schools, churches, municipal buildings, shopping centers, library, hospitals, etc.
- Directory of community organizations, activities, social services, and educational programs.
- Voter registration information and forms.
- Materials provided by area businesses, including coupons for discounts/introductory offers.
- Information about special welcoming events such as free school lunch or a tea, sponsored by a school or community organization.

**Student and Family Education**

- Forms and reference materials regarding enrollment in regular and special schools and school activities, community recreation-enrichment for family members, and cultural and educational resources in the community.
- Brochures about school-home relations, how parents can work with teachers, homework responsibilities of students and parents, and support programs such as tutors and

homework telephone hotlines.

A month or so after the home visit, a representative of the school district makes a phone call to the home. The caller learns if the family has any questions or school-related problems that have arisen since the home visit. The caller can also solicit the family's view of or insights into the school, district, and community.

In summary, staff in schools dedicated to parent/community involvement might follow Fox Meadow's example and design a home visit program to welcome and inform all new citizens in the community. Such a program can be effective in establishing congenial relations and helping build a foundation of support and cooperation between school staffs and new families to a community.

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"School isn't an entitlement, Sally, it's a must!"

by William Sharp, Helen M. Sharp & James K. Walter

# An Excellent Public Relations Program Can Begin With Low-Cost Methods

**School administrators must be public relations specialists. Their challenge—given tough times, tight budgets, demands for reforms, and often critical parents and vocal community members—is to create a positive and accurate image for their schools. In order to do so, they must examine district strategies and efforts, including a pervasive in-house public relations focus, that will enhance awareness about the schools' efforts, successes, and challenges.**

School administrators can create favorable climates for their schools even in these times of reduced resources. Fortunately, creative solutions at little or no cost to the district are possible.

The place to start to improve a school's public relations efforts without spending a lot of money is with a plan for effective communications. The plan should set goals for improving the school's public image and serve as a guide to coordinate the community relations effort. Such a plan should include a list of all the groups of people who need to receive various messages about the schools and who should, in turn, have ample opportunities to provide feedback and opinions to school officials and the staff. These groups might be employees, parents, governmental, community, and business leaders. School officials must know who the leaders are, what they are interested in, and what methods will be effective in conveying information to and obtaining information from these leaders.[1]

A forward-thinking principal or superintendent can consider conducting a survey of parents and/or community members to discover their perceptions of all phases of the educational program. Such a survey can be prepared by a committee of staff and parents, but be sure to use an outside consultant to ensure clarity for a valid survey. Another method is to gather information from small focus groups in the community, keeping in mind that the opinions may not be representative of the whole community. Similarly, the staff can hold parent coffees and use employee councils to find out the views of these groups.[2]

The following guidelines and specific suggestions target four typical school situations: The impression the staff at a school makes with those people contacting the district, the contacts those in school make with those at home, the staff's effort to communicate to people in writing and through publications, and the involvement of community members in the schools.

### 1. Personal and Phone Contacts With the Public

First impressions are important, and all school employees need to be reminded in a friendly but firm manner that they may be the ones to create a first impression for people visiting or phoning the school. Staff development efforts should be devoted to effective relations with the public, and these sessions should include "the receptionist who answers the phone and the

other people who come in close, daily contact with the public."[3]

The secretary is usually the first person who greets someone arriving at school, and the participation of secretaries in any inservice concerning contacts with the public is essential. Secretaries should receive special instructions in techniques in handling visitors and in proper manners in answering the telephone,[4] while principals and other staff members need to be reminded of their obligations to support the secretary, who is often at the hub of a busy and even frantic office at times.

*"Every staff member needs reminders or even instructions about positive and effective public relations efforts, especially with parents."*

School administrators must establish workshops for secretaries, either conducting the programs themselves or bringing in others to do it. Some of the topics which should be covered are the following:

• Handling messages

Often, overburdened receptionists and secretaries seem to be pressured to dispose of callers as soon as possible, to get a name and phone number, rather than attempt to discover the nature of the inquiry. Instead of saying that the principal is not in the office and asking for a name and number, the secretary should say, "Mrs. Jones is not in the office. Is there any way that I can help you?" Most secretaries can answer many questions and save the principal a call. Administrators need to discuss among themselves and with their support staff the best ways to handle incoming calls and inquiries.

• Exhibiting a helpful attitude

Answering a call with a standard greeting, such as "Thank you for calling Maple High School. May I help you?" starts the conversation on a positive note.

• Using students in the office

With tight budgets and busy offices, students are often used to greet people at the office counter or answer the phone. Yet, students cannot convey the desired professional impression, nor can they always understand the purpose of phone calls or who should receive the calls. No business would consider using an 11-year-old to be its first contact with the public, yet school officials routinely do this. Students' help should be reserved for other tasks in the school, such as showing visitors around the building.

• Greeting visitors in the office

Students should not be the initial contact in the office as they have a tendency to socialize with the other students who come into the office, rather than behave like efficient receptionists. A school secretary can create the desired impression with a warm "May I help you?" and "Would you care to be seated while you wait?" Comfortable seating with school publications nearby to browse through are courtesies to extend while answers to questions are sought or the persons located for a scheduled appointment.

• Alerting administrators to potential problems

At times, a school visitor may seem upset; e.g., a parent who has a problem that someone must resolve. Secretaries can advise administrators about a special situation or seemingly potential problem. When a secretary alerts the principal, this administrator has time to look up records or make a call to someone who can provide information about the situation before meeting with the parent.

• Providing visible and clear directions for visitors

"All Visitors Must Report to the Main Office"

reads the sign which is located on many school entrances. However, upon entry, be sure that a visitor can, in fact, easily locate the Main Office. No matter how large or small the building, a good locator map showing present position and the office location is helpful to those with first-time business in the school.

Also, encourage staff (especially teachers) to notice visitors entering the building and to ask them if they need directions or assistance. Not only is this good public relations, it is required for safety reasons. All strangers to the building must be noticed and their purpose in being there identified promptly to ensure proper security.

2. Positive Contacts With the Home

A school staff is in business to meet the educational needs of a wide variety of students; however, every professional in the district needs reminders or even actual instruction about positive and effective public relations efforts, specific techniques and strategies, especially with parents. Content could include:

- Practice "the gentle art of listening" so that parents can discuss the problems or issues weighing on them. "Listening without comment while parents release their anxiety or anger is often the better part of wisdom."[5]
- Suggest that all staff members commit to making a minimum of two positive phone calls every semester to the parent or guardian of students with whom they work.[6]
- Consider offering workshops that allow parents to experience the school curriculum, highlighting selected topics, such as whole language and the use of manipulatives in math instruction.[7]
- Re-think the "professional, businesslike manner" that teachers may have been taught to display to parents. One ongoing university study reveals that parents report a "personal touch" as the most enhancing factor in school relations. Many parents also value timely information about student-teacher disagreements or possible problems and prefer less formal relationships with children's teachers. That is, they would rather have a phone call today than a letter or memorandum next week about a possible or real problem.
- Involve parents in an enrichment program. One suggestion is Active Parenting, a program that helps participants learn to rear cooperative, responsible, and courageous children; New Parents as Teachers, a program focused on developing parenting skills for teenage parents with children up to three years of age, or Operation Fail-Safe, an intervention program designed to raise student achievement levels.
- Offer information from workshops to parents who cannot attend them. Use video recordings, tapes, summaries, newsletters, and cable television shows. In addition, effective forms of communication for reaching parents include conferences with every parent at least once a year, with translators used for language-minority families, and weekly or monthly folders of work sent home and reviewed with comments returned. Moreover, teachers can design homework assignments that include parents' involvement.[9]
- Assign each student an advisor who meets and comes to know the student's family over the entire period of enrollment. This is a vital linkage.[10] This advisor can be a teacher or other professional in the building who meets a group of students on a regular basis. This is especially effective at the high school level. It can easily be incorporated into the Homeroom period if the school has established one in the school schedule.
- Ensure effective parent-teacher conferences. Provide guidelines for parents in the school newsletter and give teachers articles about holding successful conferences.[11] Establish clear goals for teachers for conferences, such as beginning with positive information and citing specific examples to make points.[12] Teachers

should also use active listening techniques, both verbal and nonverbal communications, and use effective questioning skills.[13]

3. Written Communications To Parents and the Community

Researchers who studied written messages sent from schools and interviewed district educators found that all of the people surveyed emphasized the critical need to communicate effectively and efficiently with the community.[14] A method one district administrator used was to send quarterly reports to the entire community. While this is certainly an expense, district officials attributed the passing of a school bond referendum directly to those mailings. Other suggestions mentioned in the literature include the following:

- When the "good news" of a district does not receive media prominence, district officials should develop periodic "general interest" educational stories for local feature coverage in newspapers and on local television stations.[15]
- The staff can mail student progress reports on a regular basis. One Arkansas elementary school sends "Positive Postcards" to parents every Wednesday, not only from teachers but, on occasion, also from cafeteria and custodial staff members.[16]
- When new businesses come into the community, the school staff should send them welcoming letters and include district publications and the annual report.[17]
- The staff can use school notecards to send handwritten notes about superior student progress to their parents or guardians, thanking them for their cooperation. Also, the staff in one school sends personal letters with positive messages, before school opens in the fall, to those students who have a high risk of truancy.[18]
- At least on an annual basis, all written reports, newsletters, and other materials should be reviewed by an in-house editor or a consultant to evaluate their effectiveness, use of language and jargon, and make suggestions on how written messages can be improved.
- Finally, the administration should consider other effective ways to provide information, such as computerized phone messages and local cable television and radio.[19]

Many school officials find that school and/or district newsletters are effective ways to communicate with parents and community members. Newsletters must be factual, attractive, and sent on a regular basis to keep the school's mission, accomplishments, and plans in the forefront of people's minds.[20] When newsletters are easy to read, they help promote effective home-school partnerships and provide an on-going link to educational programs and practices. Including teacher overviews of relevant topics and happenings in the schools is a fine way to convey information.[21]

4. Involvement of Community Members in the School

Drawing upon human resources in the community can tap an unlimited source of supplementary educational experiences for students. The following are some ways the skills of community members can benefit students:

- Invite local senior citizens to teach mini-courses in the classroom once or twice a month.[22]
- Establish a volunteer corps for every aspect of education, from remedial tutoring to foreign language clubs at elementary school and lectures by local business leaders and professors at secondary schools.[23]

Survey parents as possible volunteers, as they "are often in key positions to bring the community to the student."[24] Involve parents and citizens in school student activities that can include ecology projects, Humane Society, Friends of the Zoo, Toys for Tots, various drives, soup kitchens, United Way, March of Dimes, and the pairing of students with residents of

local nursing homes.

• Consider creating a comprehensive volunteer program to help in the classroom, provide tutoring for students, work with reading readiness and home learning activities, and help with workshops and open houses. The keys to success in such a program seem to be a formal invitation to participate[25] and the use of coordinators at various levels to keep order and ensure that scheduling is effective.

• Invite hobbyists and professional craftspeople to perform demonstrations during teaching hours and encourage them to include students in the demonstrations.[26]

## Conclusion

In the 1990s, according to DeLapp and Smith, it is more critical than ever that we 'market' the importance of education to the community. If educators do not build support, involvement and understanding, public confidence in education will continue to erode. It is up to school leaders to find ways so that parents, civic leaders, elected officials, the business community and the general public realize that schools are an excellent investment in the future with a high rate of return.[27]

Promoting schools to parents and the community, conveying accurate information to them, and soliciting information from the community are attributes of an excellent public relations program. Such a program does not have to cost a lot of money, but it will take time and effort with a sincere commitment from the staff, if it is to be successful and result in the continued improvement of our schools.

Dr. William L. Sharp is associate dean of the College of Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and has been a school superintendent in Illinois and Indiana. He has co-authored *The Principal As School Manager*, which was just published by Technomic. He has also written *Collective Bargaining in the Public School* (Brown Publ.).

Helen M. Sharp teaches at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and has written articles for educational journals, newspapers, and written many book reviews. She has taught at every level from junior high through university and has worked for a public relations firm.

Dr. James K. Walter has been a principal and superintendent as well as teaching at the university level. He is the co-author of *The Principal As School Manager*, along with Dr. Sharp.

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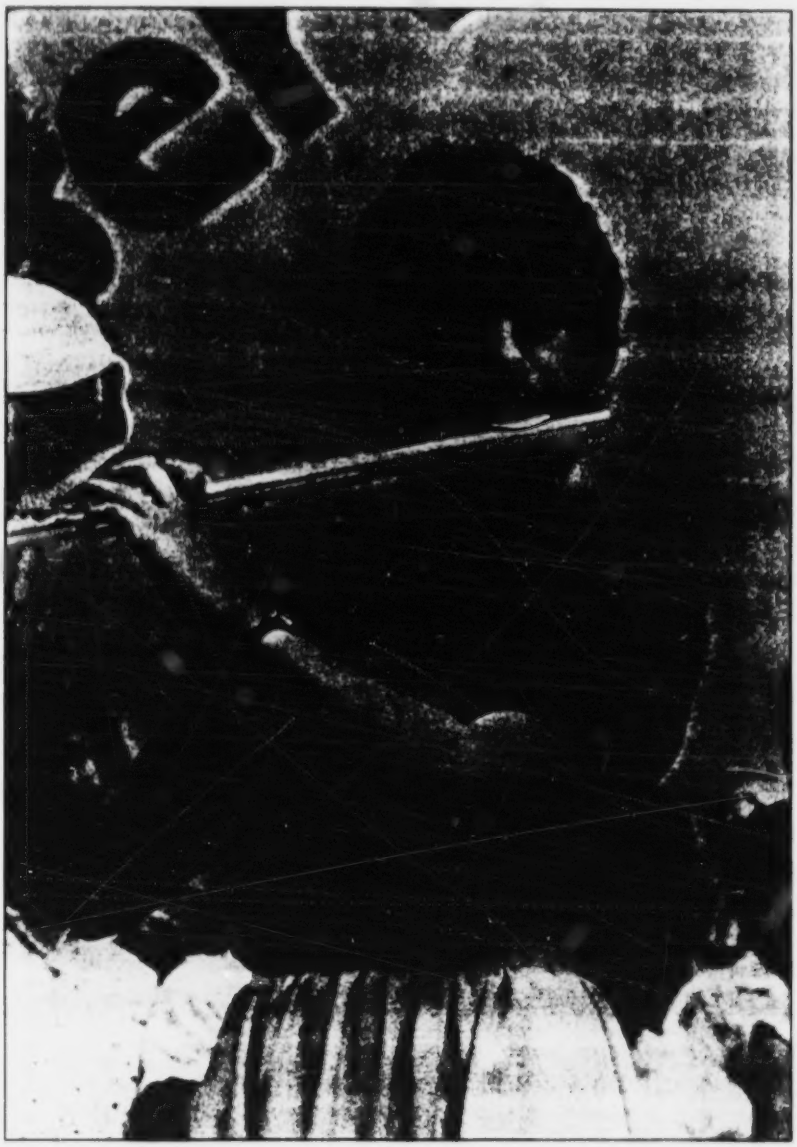
## Gallery

Photo by Dale Gehman



Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve.

*Roger Levin*

## Gallery

Photo by Geri Kodey

This could be such a beautiful world
if we could all care just a little more.

*Rosalind Welcher*



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

by Al Holliday

# Write and Share Your Ideas—

## Guidelines to Publishers Who Want Your Article

Administrators and principals who list articles published in their own resumes are almost an anomaly in basic education. That's unfortunate, as successful and innovative educators have so much they could and should share, in print, with their peers and potential administrators.

Education has about 20 journals and periodicals that are aimed at practitioners in K-12 schooling, as opposed to higher education and research. A few of the large circulation magazines receive more manuscripts than can be used. However, most of the others welcome practical problem-solving materials that will benefit their membership subscriber readers.

We asked the editors of the best-known periodicals in North America for their contributor guidelines, and have summarized their requirements for this special report. A few notes on the items in the report follow:

- The *monthly* frequency usually means just during the school year, 10 to 11 issues.
- Many editors prefer an advance query about the scope of an article. Most, however will look at a manuscript without a query. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a response to a query or a manuscript returned.
- The *length* refers to feature articles. Most magazines have departments in which short items can be used. If you have a great idea that requires only 500 words to explain, an editor will find a place to put it.
- Most magazine editors can use a computer disk with the copy. Usually, an editor will request the author supply a disk after the article has been edited, as may be necessary for a publication's format and style.
- Some publications use a panel of peers to judge or rate an article if it is "worthy" of publication. Juried publications are a necessity for contributors from higher education,where frequent publication is a requirement for tenure or promotion.

In our *Journal's* case, we have begun use of a panel of jurors, mainly to encourage submissions from higher education specialists in our field. We reserve the right, as do several other editors, to bypass the panel for commissioned articles or those that may meet a particular need.

- Being published in a juried magazine can be an advantage to a public or private school administrator who may be in the position of being considered as an adjunct professor for a course in school-community relations at a nearby college or university.
- Many traditional journals follow a style book, such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Some of the popular magazines prefer a straight journalistic style, or the style found in a general consumer magazine (without footnotes and multiple references/citations, for example).

In all cases, a "new" author is advised to review an issue or two of a periodical before sending an article for consideration. Most editors will be willing to send you their current contributor guidelines and a recent issue of the magazine if you send a request with a 9" x 12" self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Not to be overlooked, of course, are the education magazines published in one's own state. Most school board associations have periodicals and their editors usually welcome timely features that deal with issues unique to that state.

We encourage our readers to circulate this special report with their staffs and perhaps stimulate a few of them to seek bylines in national or state publications.

# Publication Guidelines, Set 1

| Name of Publication / Circulation, if known | Purpose / Content | Frequency | Publisher |
|---|---|---|---|
| *School Administrator* 17,500 | Timely issues, district level school administration | Monthly | American Assn School Admin. |
| *Middle School Journal* 17,500 | Theory, practice middle level education | Quarterly | National Middle School Assn |
| *Community Education Journal* 1,800 | Ideas and practices in community education | Quarterly | Nat. Community Education Assn |
| *Bulletin* 42,000 | Trends, practices, research Grades 7-12 | Monthly | Nat'l Assn. of Sec. School Admin. |
| *Kappan* 150,000 | Issues, practices in all areas of education | Monthly | Phi Delta Kappa |
| *Executive Educator* | How school leaders solve problems | Monthly | American School Board Assn |
| Educational Horizons 12,000 | Variety of educational issues | Quarterly | Phi Lambda Theta |
| *American School Board Journal* 39,000 | School governance, management | Monthly | American School Board Assn |
| *Principal* 28,000 | Issues, practices in elementary, middle education | Monthly | Nat. Assn. of Elem. School Princips |
| *Instructor* | Timely issues in elementary education | Monthly | Scholastic, Inc |
| *Educational Leadership* 205,000 | Curriculum, instruction, supervision, leadership | Monthly | Assn. for Sup. and Curriculum Dev |
| *Record in Educational Administration* | Issues in supervision and administration | Two | Wright State University |
| *Contemporary Education* | Problems, issues in education | Quarterly | Indiana State University |
| *Journal of Educational Public Relations* 1,500 | Communication, relationships, PR | Quarterly | Educational Communication Cer |
| *People and Education: The Human Side of Schools* | "Presents the complexities of people's roles and interactions in education" | Quarterly | Corwin Press |
| *Journal for a Just and Caring Education* | Research and practice re: creating caring educational communities | Quarterly | Corwin Press |

| Query Preferred? | Artide Length | Illustrations | Juried | Style-Stylebook |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1,500-3,000 | Yes; Headshots | No | Not Specified |
| No | 15 pages | Yes | Yes | American Psychological Assn. |
| No | 1,500-2,000 | Yes | Yes | Chicago Manual of Style |
| No | 2,000-3,000 | Drawings, tables, charts ; no photos | No | Chicago Manual of Style |
| No | 1,500-5,000 | Sparingly, uses cartoons | No | Chicago Manual of Style |
| Yes | Five-Seven Pages | Not specified | No | Journalistic |
| No | Up to 15 pages | Encouraged | Yes | Chicago Manual of Style |
| Yes | Five-Seven Pages | Not specified | No | Journalistic |
| Yes | 1,000-2,500 | Charts, tables, photographs | No | Journalistic |
| Yes | Open | Yes | No | Journalistic |
| No | 1,500-2,500 | Photos, artwork | No | Chicago Manual of Style |
| No | 1,500-3,000 | No | Yes | American Psychological Assn. |
| No | 1,500-2,000 | Charts, tables | Yes | American Psychological Assn. |
| No | 1,000-3,500 | Photos, cartoons | Yes | American Psychological Assn. |
| No | 15-20 pages | No | Yes | American Psychological Assn. |
| No | 15-20 pages | No | Yes | American Psychological Assn. |

# Publication Guidelines, Set 2

| Name | Multiple submissions OK? | Copies required | Computer Disc | References / Citations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *School Administrator* | No | Two | WordPerfect | Minimal |
| *Middle School Journal* | No | Five | Not specified | Traditional |
| *Community Education Journal* | Notify Editor | Five | WordPerfect 5.1 | Traditional |
| *Bulletin* | Notify Editor | Original and one copy | Macintosh 3 1/2, Wang 8 1/2 | Traditional |
| *Kappan* | No | One | Not specified | Traditional |
| Executive Educator | No | One | WordPerfect 5.1 | Minimal (in text only) |
| *Educational Horizons* | Notify Editor | Two | Not specified | Traditional |
| *American School Board Journal* | No | One | WordPerfect 5.1 | Minimal (in text only) |
| *Principal* | No | One with disc, two without | IBM compatible; 3 1/2-5 | Avoid excessive documentation |
| *Instructor* | No | One | Not specified | Minimal |
| *Educational Leadership* | No | Two | IBM compatible | In text, list in detail at end of article |
| *Record in Educational Administration* | No | Four | Not specified | Traditional |
| *Contemporary Education* | Notify editor | Original and two copies | IBM-MacIntosh | Traditional |
| *Journal of Educational Public Relations* | Notify Editor | Three | ASCII format | Traditional |
| *People and Education* | No | Five | Not specified | Traditional |
| *Journal for a Just and Caring Education* | No | Five | IBM compatible | Traditional |

| Notification | Special Factors | Contact Editor |
|---|---|---|
| One month | Has many departments | The association at 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209-9988 |
| Four months | Relate professional experience, interpret or apply research | The association at 2600 Corporate Exchange Dr., Columbus, OH 43231 |
| Two months | Stress practical application | The association at 801 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria, VA 22314 |
| One-two months | Has many departments; also publishes other periodicals | The association at 1904 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091 |
| Two months | Has special sections and departments | The association at 408 N. Union, PO Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402 |
| Six-12 weeks | "crisp, no-nonsense articles that address professional matters of interest to our subscribers." | The association at 1680 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314 |
| Two months | Prefers black and white photos and illustrations | The association at PO Box 6626, Bloomington, IN 47407 |
| Six-12 weeks | "chronicles change, interprets issues, offers readers advice." | The association at 1680 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314 |
| Six weeks | "not a scholarly journal"' | The association at 1615 Duke St., Alexandria VA 22314 |
| Two months | Has many departments | Scholastic, Inc., 555 Broadway, NY, NY 10012-3999 |
| Two months | Most issues have a theme | The association at 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1453 |
| Two months | Processing fee is required | 373 Millett Hall, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435 |
| Two months | Issues have a theme | School of Education, SE 1005, Indiana State Univ., Terre Haute, IN 47809 |
| One month | Focus is on promoting conditions leading to student achievement, and PR programs | The center at PO Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657 |
| Two months | Include an abstract | The Editor at 4905 Lakehurst Dr., Northport, AL 35476 |
| Two months | Include an abstract | The Editor at Virgina Tech. University, 2990 Telestar Court, Falls Church, VA 22042 |

by Lynn Ainsworth

# The Opening Door—

## The decision-making process at schools should allow for parent involvement

The welcome mat is usually out for parents who want to lend a hand to the neighborhood school by providing an extra car ride on a field trip. And it stays in place for those willing to bake cookies, wash cars, sell hot dogs and go door-to-door with boxes of chocolate almonds for sale.

But some parents say it's a different story when mom and dad want to make their contribution to the school in the form of suggestions for changes in the classroom. That's when doors begin to close and the reception gets chilly.

Yet parental involvement in schools sounds about as controversial as apple pie. Who would be against it? Schools and parents is the ideal partnership—isn't it?

According to Malkin Dare, a Waterloo parent and founding member of the Organization for Quality Education—an Ontario-wide parent group—conflict arises when a parent tries to cross the line from fundraiser to activist.

"For the most part, school boards are paying lip service to the concept of parent partnership," said Dare, who watched the parent group at her children's school rise and fall at the will of several different principals.

Despite parents' success at organizing a school science fair and lunch-time programs, Dare said parents found the school suddenly unavailable to them when they wanted to organize a curriculum night for the community. "We were told by the principal we had no business talking about curriculum," said Dare.

As parents demand and secure more control over how their schools are run, Bruce Wallace, a retired principal who is now a trustee with the Wentworth County Board of Education, said management styles will change. The change, albeit, has been slow, but Wallace is convinced the days are numbered for the old-style manager who insists on being in control all the time.

"When we hire a principal today, we're looking at how he or she relates to people," explained Wallace.

Change didn't happen fast enough for Cheryl Goodridge, who fled her Etobicoke school after a principal repeatedly rebuffed parents' attempts to have a say in school activities. The school, which had a majority population of non-English speaking students, didn't have an organized parent group. Decisions were made by the principal, seemingly without community consultation. Complaints went unanswered. Like many busy working parents, Goodridge eventually just stopped asking questions.

Last year, when she—the mother of three young children—sold her Etobicoke home, she went shopping for a school where parents are welcome. When she found one she liked, she looked for a house to buy in that neighborhood.

"Before I bought the house, I toured the school and made sure I met the principal," said Goodridge, who now lives in Aurora.

Many time Goodridge wished there had been a parent organization at her school. She even contemplated starting one herself, but with three children to care for and a full-time job, time wasn't on her side.

It's important to remember that not every parent can or wants to be a community leader. Many say they'd just like to be consulted before a major decision is made at school. Others want nothing more than to be kept informed of

what's going on at their schools. But some parents who are fed up with being shut out of decision-making are bypassing officially sanctioned groups and forming their own organizations. For example, the 65,000-member North York Parent Assembly is banding together to seek strength in numbers.

In a survey commissioned by the Ontario Parent Council, parents said they want more of a say in staffing, curriculum and schools' budget decisions. Curriculum-planning and the selection of textbooks also rated high among the 550 people who responded to the survey.

"Parents in this province should have the right to be involved in a meaningful way in their children's education," said Jacqueline Latter, the council's past chair, at the release of the council's report on parent councils in July.

"The biggest barrier is attitude. Parents are at the mercy of people in power and we shouldn't have to fight all the time to have a say," said Gisele Acheson, a member of the council from Navan, Ontario.

Interviews with parents led the council to conclude that the current structure of decision-making within schools neither permits nor promotes parental involvement in a uniform fashion. Successful parental involvement depends on the positive attitude of the school principal and staff, according to the council's report.

The majority of parents who were surveyed reported that the extent of their influence has been as fundraisers or as volunteer helpers in the classroom, the school yard and the lunch room. Many said that the biggest barrier to real involvement was the school principal, described as the "gatekeeper" who can unilaterally decide whether and to what extent parents can be involved in the school.

Even when an official parent group is operating at a school, 18% of the parents surveyed felt the group's decisions were controlled by the principal. Although the principals don't vote at parent meetings, they make their wishes known by how they present their views. It's a subtle form of influence strong enough to affect how parents vote, according to the survey.

Parents can easily be kept at bay by a principal intent on running the school his or her way. Latter said that's because many parents are unsure of their role in the school system or if they even have one at all.

*In a survey commissioned by an Ontario group, parents said they want more of a say in staffing, curriculum and budget decisions.*

The Ontario Parent Council's survey also found that lack of information is a significant barrier to parental involvement. Many parents also reported feeling intimidated by school staff and teachers when they asked questions.

How parents should be involved and the extent of that involvement is the focus of much debate. In an effort to find a suitable model for the proposed school parent council, the Ontario Parent Council searched far and wide and looked at how other provinces and countries involve parents. In fact, their search needn't have taken them so far from home.

For almost two decades, the Carleton Board of Education has quietly pushed parent power. Schools in this suburban community on the outskirts of Ottawa already have parent advisory committees that elect delegates to a board-wide Carleton Parent Council.

Recognizing that not all parents share the same views, members of the Carleton Parent

Council are careful to reach consensus before taking a stand on an issue. In turn, the council selects parents to serve on four of the board's standing committees where, along with teachers, school staff and students, they have observer status. But silent partners they are not. While they can't vote, parents are free to speak to any issue that comes before the board.

"Our collective voice carries much more weight than that of an individual parent," said Suhit Das, a parent serving his second year on the council.

*Once money is allocated by trustees to a school, decisions about how the money is spent ought to be made at the school level with the assistance of parents.*

While Das sees the parent council as effective, he admits Carleton still faces problems when it comes to involving parents at the school level. Some principals and staff are still resistant to the idea that parents want to be more involved in their child's education, he said.

Talk of parent participation inevitably leads to the question of where do trustees fit into this new structure. Ann MacGregor, a trustee with the Carleton Board of Education, believes trustees will always have a role to play because they're elected not just to serve parents, but all taxpayers.

"If you're a parent, nothing is too good for your child," explained MacGregor. "But a trustee has to bear in mind the limit to what taxpayers will pay for schools."

"Right now, if a parent wants to get involved in a school, he or she has to take the initiative. That's wrong. It's the schools that should be reaching out to the parents," said Heather Bullock, a trustee with the Wentworth County Board of Education.

Bullock believes school boards have to change the way they relate to parents and taxpayers. It's a view shared by Allan Greenleaf, the Wentworth County Board of Education's director of education.

"Education systems are human organizations but often they don't present a human face," said Greenleaf in his report, *A Vision To Share: Giving the Schools Back to Their Communities.*

"The public schools are exactly that—the public's schools," said Greenleaf. "How curious, then, that we should have to spend so much time marketing the schools to the very people who own them in the hopes that they will support what we want to do," he said.

Greenleaf advocates a return to the days when parents and taxpayers determined what was acceptable at the local school level. In his model of community-based school management, the board's annual budget, staffing, collective bargaining, special education services and property management would remain the responsibility of the board. However, once money is allocated to a school, Greenleaf believes decisions about how the money is to be spent ought to be made at the local school level with the assistance of parents.

Under his proposal, parents and ratepayers would become part of a school boards' advisory group—one for each of the five municipalities served by the Wentworth County board. The advisory group would create an opportunity for people to meet regularly with the local trustee to ensure clear communication about community concerns, program expectations and budget allocation.

"What I have described is not just a pipe dream, but a vision with practical applicability which has significant implications for the successful operation of a public education system," said Greenleaf. "It is also an incredibly powerful means of overcoming the skepticism with which the system is viewed today because the community will have an active voice in determining how its schools are operated."

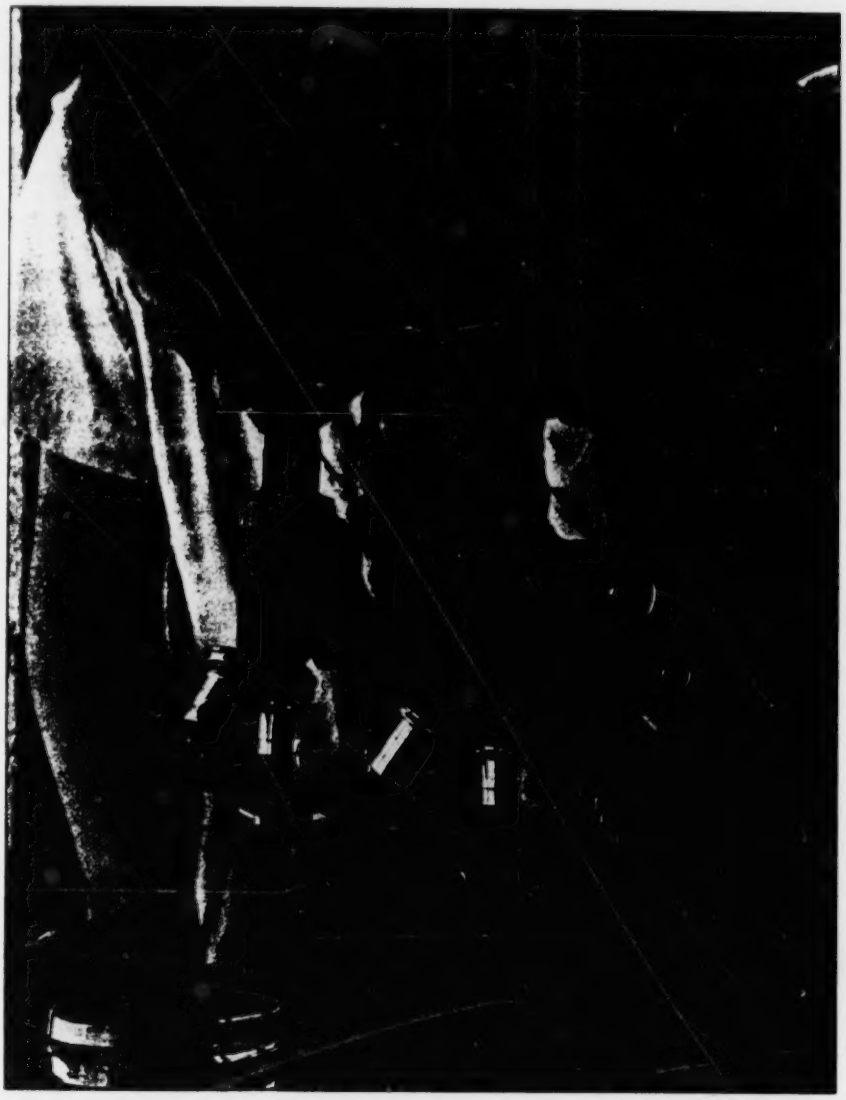
Lynne Ainsworth is a freelance writer. This article appeared in the September/October 1994 issue of *Education Today*, published by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (439 University Ave., 18th floor, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G1Y8 and is reprinted with the permission of *Education Today* editor Heather Roseveare Dion.

## Ways parents can be involved at their children's school

- Review policies and procedures re report cards, homework, transportation, lunch, curriculum, computer use, budget, attendance discipline, evaluation of students and staff and hiring of new staff.
- Plan career days, trips, cultural activities, after school program, job shadowing, parent support groups, use of volunteers, enrichment programs, graduation ceremonies, fun fair, parent education, orientation for new families, fundraising, improvement of the facility, activity rights and roles of parent advisory groups.

## Gallery

Photo by Robert Finken



Public education is of key importance in educating young people to understand the realities of the world they will inherit, and to change it, not for the sake of change but because we will not survive without change.

*Eve Olive*





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Case Study

# PASSING THE BUCK—
## a High School Principal Ducks Making Decisions

by Philip T. West

Paul Pilotte's one guiding principle in life is "Never make a decision that you can get your boss to make; and if required to make a decision, delay making it as long as possible, preferably until it is no longer necessary to make." As principal of the J. P. Paxton High School, he abided by this principle for 20 years, even though the district had five different superintendents during that time. He watched them come, and he watched them go—some leaving for better pastures, others driven out by the board. Twice, the board had offered him the opportunity to become superintendent of the Devonshire school system and both times he had graciously declined.

Because Devonshire is a university town, both the board and community do not regard a high teacher turnover as unusual. Many teachers come to Devonshire to pursue their master's or doctorate degrees at Devonshire University. They come alone or with their spouses, stay two or three years and leave. Nobody minds the constant turnover because teacher salaries can be kept low. About a third of the high school faculty, however, has been at Paxton almost as long as their principal.

One of his teachers, a woman who had won best teacher of the year three times, was now in the beginning of her 15th year, only these days she wasn't the crackerjack teacher she once was. The year before she had lost both her husband and son in an auto accident, and the tragedy had devastated her life. The accident happened over the winter holidays on an icy day while she was in bed with the flu.

Bernice Matson, or "Bernie" as she was called by her friends and colleagues, returned to school in January and finished that semester in a kind of fog. Everybody felt sorry for her so they overlooked her drinking and tolerated her morning-after woodenness. Her frequent absences were covered by her sympathetic colleagues who wanted to help in any way they could. No one had ever seen her take a drink at work, yet several had bumped into her a couple of times in liquor stores buying enough to fill a shopping cart.

Principal Pilotte had brought the matter of Bernie's drinking to his boss's attention, Jack Early, Devonshire's former superintendent. But Early, against the wishes of a couple of board members, kept her on the staff despite her growing problem. Early even talked to her privately, recommending that she seek counseling and perhaps join Alcoholics Anonymous. And his approach might have worked if he had continued as superintendent, but he didn't. Having recently completed his doctorate at Devonshire, he wanted a greater challenge.

Principal Pilotte was uneasy about Bernie continuing to teach because he had heard rumors that she was still drinking. He would tell the new superintendent if he was sure, but he wasn't. More than once, he wondered how he could broach the subject with his boss without putting himself on the line—perhaps a hint or two might suffice. But he finally had decided to wait for others to inform the superintendent if there was any truth in the rumor. He did try to determine if she had alcohol on her breath a few times, but the perfume she wore and the lozenges she generally had in her mouth con-

fused his sense of smell.

Meanwhile, the new teachers were complaining about the discipline problems facing them in their classrooms. Although Pilotte was privy to this information through his two assistant principals, Mary Lee Davis and Jack Karter, he did his best to ignore it. The principal had a tremendously liberal philosophy about discipline: "Hands-off." During his first year as principal, when discipline problems were on the rise and teacher complaints were abundant, he had tried to institute a program to correct the situation. He wanted to help his teachers, creating a proper learning environment and making it easier for them to teach. After the third student suspension, however, the roof caved in when professors in the community banded together and practically had him removed from his job.

Later, when he had introduced the concept of an alternative school within a school for disruptive students, he had encountered similar opposition. These days, the high school did have one, but it seldom held any students—he saw to that! When teachers did recommend a student to this school, Pilotte just delayed acting on it. His liberal posture, he continually assured himself, was in keeping with the desires of the board and the community. And for the most part, he was correct, although the times were changing.

To Pilotte, there were no discipline problems in Paxton High. An occasional burst of energy by a student, not worth bothering with, was how he defined most situations. The seasoned staff would clue the new teachers on the principal's philosophy and tell them to make do as best they could because the cavalry was never going to arrive. None of Paxton's students ever took drugs, brought a weapon to school, or struck a teacher, according to Pilotte. But they had, and Pilotte had managed to conveniently erase these incidents from his memory. The girl who brought a knife to school was arrested when she waved it at someone in a local arcade, and was never to be seen again at Paxton; the students known to be taking drugs and the boy who broke a teacher's jaw had long ago graduated and moved away. Other troublesome incidents had been reported by the teachers, but he had avoided making any decisions about them, and soon both teachers and students had departed.

When a teacher once asked him if she could leave school early to take a late afternoon course at the college that she needed, he replied, "Don't you, as Paxton's PTA president, usually make bank deposits every Thursday?"

The teacher was indeed the high school's PTA president and had many hours of hard work on her record to prove it. And she did sometimes leave on a Thursday to deposit receipts, and since her class was on a Thursday, why not bend the truth a little, she concluded, particularly since he had raised this possibility. "Does this mean that I can go?"

In responding, Pilotte had avoided making a decision by saying, "It means whatever you want it to mean."

"But you're implying...," she countered before being abruptly cut off.

"I am doing nothing of the kind. I could never condone your leaving school while classes or homeroom were still in session. The board policy is strict on that. Whatever you decide to do is up to you."

While the instructor felt uneasy about leaving school without the principal's permission, she had decided to take the risk of being caught. A colleague of hers, who also needed the same course, did not even bother discussing the matter with the principal. He had been there long enough to know the principal's style, which was to keep the higher-ups happy at all times.

Once, a near riot occurred in the cafeteria, as a high school football star, a huge, brawny

senior, began pummeling another much smaller student who had accidently tipped over a carton of milk into the lap of the star's girlfriend. Forming a circle to keep the two locked within, other students urged him on. To prevent the senior from harming the other boy, a teacher jumped into the one-sided fray and dragged him away with a headlock. As the teacher and student struggled along the corridor, the student kept punching the teacher with his two free hands. The teacher, though experiencing some pain, managed to finally subdue the muscular boy and maneuver him into Pilotte's office. By then the football star was claiming that the teacher had physically abused him. "He choked me," he whined, tears starting to roll down his cheeks. The teacher, who was feeling extreme pain from the punches he had taken and not returned, pleaded innocence. But before he could tell his side of the story, the principal had severely admonished him in a fit of temper and sent him shaken to his next class.

Pilotte's anger was his defense when confronted by the situation since he did not know what action to take. He could easily imagine what the community would want—the teacher discharged and the star vindicated. Fortunately for Pilotte, the incident occurred just before the school year was over, so he could simply apologize to the boy and to his mother. All was forgiven, the mother knowing though that her son was always bullying someone, including his two younger brothers. The teacher left the school and never returned.

*Pilotte wondered how he could broach the subject of Bernie's drinking on the job with his boss without putting himself on the line.*

Dirk Hansen, the district's new superintendent, was a battleworn veteran who wanted to make Devonshire his permanent home. Over the years, his contracts had been bought out by boards a number of times to end his superintendencies, but each time he left undaunted and ready for his next challenge. Lately, he was beginning to lose confidence. He had prided himself on being a decision maker, a leader who was willing to take risks to accomplish his goals. But no longer was this true, or at least whatever had once characterized him as a trail blazer was now lying dormant within him. In his time he had made too many unpopular decisions, and he was not going to make any more—not alone, anyway. He had previously shared his authority, but not his responsibility. Now he would share both.

When he met the first time with his new administrative team, he made it quite clear to the principals that he would be providing them with considerable autonomy, but that he would also hold them responsible for their actions. "Work with your teachers," he told them. "Involve them in decision making.

"Involve your parents too, and the rest of your staff. Everybody has a stake in the success of your school and our district. Consider yourselves managers of a local enterprise who must meet the needs and interests of your customers."

With the exception of Pilotte, all of the principals were pleased with the new arrangement. They welcomed a leadership style that would increase their autonomy, give them a voice in the school budget, and enlarge their role on the administrative team. They had acted as rubber stamps too many times for domineering superintendents.

## Case Study

Pilotte's concern centered on the role he would be forced to play in a committee structure empowering members to make decisions that he might have to support. If they made a wrong decision and he supported it, he would be the one who had to accept the responsibility for any unpleasantness that might result. Yet, if he did not support the decisions of the committee, the members would probably complain to his boss. Then he would be considered irresponsible, and that would be just as bad. It would be even worse if he neither supported nor opposed, as was his policy. His final decision was simply to relay the group's recommendations to the superintendent and wait for a reply.

*Seasoned staff would clue new teachers on the principal's philosophy—there were no discipline problems on Paxton High—and tell them to make do as best they could.*

Supt. Hansen, however, was not duped one iota by the leadership style of Pilotte. Though it irritated him, he was much too busy sorting out the actions he must take in consort with his other principals to make his plan work. So far, everything was going well, and he was beginning to feel like his old self with the welcome difference that he was operating in a relatively trouble free environment.

What began the chain reaction that rocked the foundation of Paxton High, reverberated throughout the school system, and roused the community happened on a fine spring day, the first of its kind after a long, hard winter. It was a day when birds sang to the passing of winter and children took off their coats to soak up the sun. It was also the day that Bernice Matson was seen staggering dizzily along the hallway on her way to meet with her fifth period math class.

Pilotte almost choked on his candy bar when one of his teacher informants told him of the event in his office. He hurriedly decided to pass the word on to the school committee. They would certainly recommend taking some kind of disciplinary action that he could relay to his boss, the superintendent. Then Hansen would take the action that Pilotte would never risk taking. True, Bernie had been a fine teacher once, but having an alcoholic in his school was something that could cause him trouble and perhaps force him into an action that he might regret later.

When apprised of the incident, some of the committee members were reluctant to say or do anything. After all, this was a great teacher they were discussing. Others were quick to point out, though, that there was a limit to what one's former successes as a teacher could justify. A parent of one of the students who had seen Matson almost feeling her way along the corridor gave a graphic rendition of what his daughter had told him. But even then, there was considerable disagreement among the group. Pilotte just listened and waited for the decision he expected. During a short break, he managed to approach several of the members to ease them into that decision. And it worked. The final recommendation was that the board seriously reconsider hiring Bernice Matson. The committee noted that she needed outside help, and perhaps a job in another district far from one where the accident occurred would be best. A couple of the members were in favor of removing her from the classroom immediately to serve the rest of her academic year in the central office.

Pilotte wasted no time in telephoning Hansen to inform him about the incident, the events leading up to it, and what his committee had recommended. While he was speaking, the superintendent interrupted him to say, "I do not wish to discuss this matter on the phone! Please come over to my office immediately." With that Hansen had banged down the phone so hard that Pilotte felt instantly alarmed.

When he entered the superintendent's office, the principal's hands were shaking. There were no amenities exchanged by the two as Hansen plunged into the matter.

"It's been my observation, Paul, that you have a proclivity for being mute when some kind of decision is to be made. At team meetings, you say nothing unless I endorse it. No decisions come directly from you. You have your committee making them, and then you play Pony Express. I understand, according to your teachers, that you decide nothing at all." Hansen shook his head in disgust while his principal looked away from him.

"I have heard the story about Bernice Matson," the superintendent continued. "It is a sad one and I sympathize with her. But I cannot have someone under the influence teaching our students. If you feel that she must be discharged, put in writing why you think so, and tell me what you recommend, not what your committee recommends. About this, they know little more than what you tell them. The woman has been under your employ for 15 years and you act as if you can be an impartial observer in the matter. If you intend to continue as principal in this school district, you had better shape up and act like one. Now, what do you say?"

*Supt. Hansen gave his administrators considerable autonomy but told them they would be held responsible for their actions. All the principals but Pilotte were pleased.*

Pilotte felt pains in his stomach that were spreading quickly to his extremities. He thought he was having a heart attack, but then he thought of the three candy bars he'd eaten that afternoon and relaxed somewhat. "I recommend getting rid of her," he responded with a sense of finality, as if the guillotine were imminent.

"Put that in writing," commanded the superintendent. "I assume you have sufficient documentation?"

"Just about anybody in the school will verify it."

Unfortunately, before Pilotte could even write the letter, others knew that Matson would not have her contract renewed. The superintendent, taking advantage of the spring air and sunshine, had opened his office window and two teachers entering the building had heard the conversation. A custodian emptying the trash was also privy to it. The superintendent's voice had been loud and carried far. Word quickly spread throughout the district

During Bernie's tenure, half the community seemed to have passed through her classroom. It was incredible to see one teacher with so huge a following. The phone calls that ensued from parents and past students (most of whom were now parents themselves), interrupted all regular business at the high school and in the central office. Even both past and present PTA members immediately aligned themselves with the cause to keep Bernie teaching at the high-school. Most of the district's previous board members appeared to feel the same way, while the current board was divided, but being swayed by their constituencies.

Pilotte regretted stating his decision to the superintendent. He should have kept faith with his principle. He need not have said anything to the committee or the superintendent. Matson would have done herself in without his help. Now he was being besieged by calls from her supporters. His committee was also being disparaged for what they had recommended and they were being blamed for it.

Meanwhile, Superintendent Hansen was almost frothing at the mouth. His fury was directed at Pilotte, whom he imagined would somehow ease himself out of the mess while the board, in desperation, would probably vindicate itself by dumping him.

*Hansen's fury was directed at Pilotte who had escaped his responsibilities for years. It was up to Hansen to be the risk-taker once more.*

The latest information was that Matson had not been intoxicated that day in the hallway, but that she was experiencing high blood pressure problems brought on by her long bouts with alcohol. She claimed that she had not touched a drop of alcohol in three months, and that since she began taking medication in the past few weeks she has not had any more dizzy spells. In addition, her students were spreading the word that she was the best teacher in the school.

Pilotte felt that he was still in the clear, though. He had put nothing in writing. He was also denying having said anything negative about Matson so many times, that people were beginning to believe him and turn an accusing finger towards Hansen.

In his office pondering his fate, the superintendent concluded that Pilotte was the worst kind of principal. For years, Pilotte had escaped his responsibilities and helped no one. Had his administrators and teachers been of the same ilk, nothing would ever be accomplished at Paxton. It was up to Hansen to be the risk-taker once more. He would have to put his job on the line to rid the district of the man who washed his hands of everything and everybody. Working against Hansen, though, was the long tenure of Pilotte. The principal was a known quantity while he—the district's new superintendent—was the algebraic unknown. Gathering his forces, he began to formulate his plan of action.

Philip T. West is a professor of educational administration at Texas A&M University.

Response to Case Study in Vol. 16, No. 2

## Case Study Response

# A Pilot Is No Leader

by Jennifer Barnette

Paul Pilotte had managed to hold his position as principal of J. P. Paxton High School for 20 years and through several superintendents despite having never made an administrative decision. He had a long history of "passing the buck." The latest superintendent, Dick Hansen, had recently specified what the role of each member of his administrative team would be—responsible leadership. Now, much to his dismay, he was faced with an ugly situation involving one of his best teachers.

Bernice Matson's record speaks for itself. She had been named best teacher of the year three times in her 15 years of service to Devonshire education. She was highly respected by her colleagues, as well as by the community. She had just one drawback—suspected alcoholism. The teacher had suffered the loss of her husband and child in an auto accident the year before, and a dependency on alcohol appeared to develop since then.

Pilotte had notified the former superintendent of the possible situation, but he had left the district before implementing methods for dealing with it.

Now Matson had been seen stumbling down the hall to her classroom, and a fellow teacher was quick to tell Pilotte what he saw.

Pilotte is overly anxious to turn the decision over to the new school leadership committee, hoping they will vote to dismiss her of her duties, and he will be "let off the hook" once again. Superintendent Hansen, however, has something else in mind.

On the surface, the problem is Matson's rumored drinking. But before any decisions are made, she should be given the opportunity to tell her side of the story to the board. If she is drinking, then she should be taken out of the classroom immediately. The board could fire her with no questions asked, no matter how first rate a teacher she is, or they could reassign her to an administrative position until the end of the year.

But more than that, the surface problem brings forward the underlying problem of Principal Pilotte's lack of backbone. He has continually "escaped from doing anything and helping anyone." His indecisiveness has allowed a critical situation to remain unsolved. Ever since the accident, Pilotte has suspected that Bernice Matson has had a problem with alcohol, and that her addiction has caused several other problems, such as continued tardiness, absenteeism, and lack of control in the classroom.

Regardless of what action Pilotte takes concerning the teacher, Hansen must put a stop to Pilotte's nonsense once and for all.

Jennifer Barnette is an editorial assistant on *The AASA Professor* and a graduate assistant in the Department of Educational Administration at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

# PR FAX

Philip T. West of Texas A&M University began a research report in this Journal in 1980. The PR FAX newsletter, published by the Center for Public Relations of the University Council for Educational Administration, was devoted to abstracts of research articles in its issues of 1993 and early 1994.

Previous Journals are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Inc., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor MI 48106. Photocopies of selected pages (by volume and number) are $1 each plus a stamped, self-addressed 9"x12" envelope (checks only, no purchase orders). Order photocopies from the Journal of Educational Public Relations, PO Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17011.

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, UCEA PROGRAM CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

WINTER 1993 VOLUME 2, NO. 1

## PR Research Article Bibliography

The annotations for the following PR research articles were prepared by Kelly Bostrom, Chris Calvin, Jim Davis, Gary D. Giebel, Aura L. Gromala, Alicia R. Ingram, Laune Rath, David R. Sahm, Greg Steel, and Mike Tomchesson. The articles originated in the Research Section of the *Journal of Educational Communication*, now titled the *Journal of Educational Public Relations*. They include the years 1980 to 1983.

The annotations should prove especially useful to professors compiling an educational PR bibliography for their classes and to students gathering research on a particular topic in educational PR for a written or oral presentation. The annotations should also prove useful to PR practitioners interested in educational PR research.

Carruthers, Jr., R. L. (1980). Importance of communication affirmed by school superintendents. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(2), 36.

Of the top five internship experience areas perceived by superintendents as necessary for superintendency preparation, school-community relations ranked first. Communication also surfaced as important in two other internship experience areas. Ranked second and fifth, respectively, they were school board relations and principal-superintendent relations.

Colson, S. (1980). Students gain from community-based education. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(2), 36.

In a study of gifted high school students in College Station, Texas, students who had participated in community-based career education found that their high school had provided positive career information and opportunities. Those who did not receive the education did not believe the regular school program provided career information and opportunities.

Kilgore, A. M. (1980). Teachers say school-community relations are important. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4 (2), 36.

A survey of school community relations yielded the following findings: 1) Teacher's and principal's views on school-community relations are different. 2) Teachers feel that they should participate in school-community relations, but are limited by a lack of policy. 3) Teachers believe that parent conferences are the most critical way for them to influence public relations. 4) Teachers, due to a lack of college preparation, know very little about public relations, and look to principals for guidance.

Sherman, F. (1980). The image of teachers in Iowa. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(2), 37.

In a study done for the Iowa State Education Association by Central Surveys, Inc., of Shenandoah, Iowa, it was reported that Iowans are twice as likely as the national sample to have a great deal of trust and confidence in teachers and the public school system, regardless of collective bargaining and political activity by the teachers.

Hanson, M. K. (1980). Reaching the potential client for post secondary technical/vocational programs. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(3), 35.

Over half of 400 technical/vocational students interviewed said they had received their most helpful information about the post secondary programs from campus visits. The remaining 50 percent indicated the following as helpful: mailed material (25%), friends (10%), institutional representatives (10%), and their high school counselor (5%).

Horne, P. S. (1980). Displaced homemaker programs bring higher education into community. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(3), 35-36.

According to this study, the community is an essential element for developing a displaced homemaker program. A variety of people are served by displaced homemaker programs. Woman and people experiencing financial and emotional problems are the primary recipients of these programs. Additional program benefits are increased community awareness and support. Each program is structurally unique, but most programs offer counseling and auxiliary services as basic areas.

Traweek, E. (1980). PR director has limited role in collective negotiations. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(3), 34.

PR directors perceive that they have a limited role in the collective negotiation process. The only role PR directors perceive themselves as having is a communications role that may or may not affect the collective negotiations process. In order to alter the traditional perception, PR directors must be trained in the collective negotiation process.

Wells, J. C. (1980). School-community relations ranked fourth as needed internship experience. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(3), 34-35.

The area of school-community relations was viewed by administrative interns as a very important part of the curriculum used in the training of public school principals and superintendents in Texas higher educational institutions. Curriculum rankings varied, depending on institutional size. Interns from small universities ranked school-community relations 2nd, those from medium universities 7th, and those from large universities 4th.

Conners, D. A. (1980). Understanding politics is necessary in elections. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4 (4), 34.

Educators can be more effective in school-community politics if they study and understand suburban community power structure.

Derryberry, C. (1981). Info programs are needed to recruit students for non-traditional careers. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(4), 33.

In a 1979 survey of 400 high school students in the Houston Independent School District, stereotyping prevented students from being attracted to non-traditional careers, such as engineering for women and nursing for men.

Kline, C. E., Tweedy, T. J. (1981). Elementary school principals favor community involvement. *Journal of Educational Communication*. 4(4), 32.

In a recent study, communication appears to be the foundation for the involvement of elementary school principals in the community. Demographics of the schools and data about the principals themselves were considered when reporting the results of the survey.

Leone, D. A., & Podemski, R. S. (1981). School-community relations valued in districts with decreasing enrollment. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4(4), 3.

In a dissertation at the University of Arkansas, it was reported that school-community relations programs differ in school districts with decreasing enrollments from those with stable or increasing enrollments.

Southerland, J. M. (1981). Communications and PR viewed as critical for placement officers. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4 (4), 34.

Educational placement officers across the nation in a Delphic study ranked communications and public relations as critical tasks in their field of work.

Whetten, C. L. (1981). Advisory council role in decision-making to increase. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 4 (4), 35.

In a recent study of 184 Texas community education administrators, it was found that a gap exists between present and ideally perceived roles of school-community advisory councils.

Brannen, D. E. (1981). Men paid higher salaries than women in educational public relations. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(1), 337.

The roles and responsibilities of men and women in public school, public relations positions are compared in this study. Within this context the salaries of both groups are examined.

Dierksen, C. N., & Oberg, T. (1981). Students are the best source of school information for parents. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(1), 36-37.

According to a survey of parents, school leaders would be wise to expend more time and effort in their relations with their students. Parents surveyed obtained most school information from their children. The Texas study also reflects attitudes of the community surveyed and gives a summary of the findings.

Gorton, D., & Strobel, P. (1981). Principals' actions fall short of stated attitudes toward community relations. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(1), 35-36.

Research demonstrates administrators' inability to commit to real improvements in school-community relationships, thus hindering the process. The study was conducted state-wide in Wisconsin using a 42-item questionnaire with an 88% response. The article also suggests several ways to effectively improve community relations.

Nasstrom, R. R. (1981). Principals view parents as enemies. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5 (1), 35.

Principals at the secondary level foster unhealthy attitudes toward parents as compared to school leaders at the elementary and middle school levels. The study reflects findings of interviews conducted with 42 secondary principals. The implications are far-reaching with regard to school-community relations.

Erlandson, D. A. (1981). Administrators cite need for community interaction. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(2), 33.

Administrators of six Texas School districts rated community interaction as an essential elemnt for organizational effective management.

Secondary school volunteers enhance school-community relationships through their involvement in numerous tasks. While many of these tasks vary from school to school, others (14 of which were tested in this article) are very similar.

Zent, R. (1982). Educational TV station managers need formal administrative training. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(4), 9-10.

A recent survey of educational TV station managers showed that many perform critical management functions and tasks, despite the lack of formal management training. The survey listed 21 critical management tasks that many of these managers perform. This survey was part of a nationwide study designed to analyze administrative functions common to TV managers employed in institutions of higher education with on-air public television stations.

Constant, R., & Oberg, T. (1982). Knowledge, honesty most important characteristics. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(1), 37-38.

Professional knowledge and honesty were the most important characteristics a female could possess, according to a nationwide survey of top male executives. The study consisted of personal interviews with top public relations professionals and a questionnaire which asked male executives to rate the traits they think lead to success for female executives.

Hyder, L.R., & Achilles, C. M. (1982). Direct contact is preferred means of communicating to and with the public. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(1), 38-39.

Direct contact is the best means for school officials to communicate with the public and especially with journalists, according to a survey of 102 Tennessee school systems. School PR professionals and journalists who cover schools rated effectiveness of one- and two-way communication methods. PR professionals rated teacher conferences with parents and open school board meetings among their most effective methods and considered news releases to newspapers and broadcast outlets among their most favored one-way communications methods. Journalists also identified open school board meetings as a top means for two-way communication and press conferences or interviews with school personnel as their most preferred one-way communication method.

Parnell, W. G., & Lilley, H. L. (1982). Colleges may have more than one image. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(1), 39.

Students and faculty held different images of their school in a campus-wide study. Eleven areas were studied, from academic standards to physical facilities. Only perceptions of "student conduct" and "staff attitude" showed no significant difference between the two student groups, both of whom reflected a positive image for the college studied. Student responses were categorized by sub-groups, and only commuters versus non-commuters saw a substantial difference in school perception, with commuters ranking their college more favorably.

Rainey, M. F. (1982). School leaders rate communications skills tops. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(1), 37.

Communicating with staff members ranked highest in importance to school administrators and supervisors who responded to a six-page questionnaire. In the study "creating and maintaining open channels of communications with staff" was followed by "establishing good communications with parents and other citizens" and "using communications skills" in order of administrators' priorities. The sample was comprised of administrators from Southern Georgia.

Dierksen , C.(1982). PR people on the "team" have increased responsibility. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 6(2), 34-35.

Public relations professionals holding membership on administrative teams have more responsibility than those not on teams. Team and non-team members differed on 33 of 45 characteristics. Team members were more likely to be males with a college degree and had more teaching experience than did non-team members. Team members also had more administrative experience and were more likely to have administrative certification.

Tolson, R. B. (1982). Supts, Directors of service centers differ on PR priorities. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(2), 35.

Small school PR needs were viewed by Texas superintendents as less important than they were by service directors, according to a Texas study. The two groups differed on how small school PR services could be improved, with the lowest-rated need identified by superintendents appearing first on the improvement list from service center directors. A large gap was identified between school PR needs and available service center services, with the greatest gap in two areas: developing year-round information programs and staff development in school PR. Superintendents from several small Texas schools and directors from 19 educational service centers were surveyed.

Anderson, R. E. (1983). Board members emphasize communication factors when selecting a superintendent of schools. *Journal of Educational Communication* , 6(3), 36-37.

School board members rated the importance of 17 behaviors displayed by superintendents during the selection process.

Hinojosa, D., (1983). Participation improves student-school retention, *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(3), 37.

Participation in extra-curricular activities and higher grades were positively correlated in Texas migrant students. To increase the low participation, it was recommended that extra-curricular activities be made more accessible to students and parent education of activities be increased.

Golen S. (1981). Communication barriers identified by college students. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(2), 33.

According to this study, the most serious communication barriers identified by college students are: tendency not to listen; lack of interest in the subject matter; poor organization of ideas; resistance to change; hostile attitude; physical noise; distractions, and too many intermediate receivers between the sender and intended receiver of information. The study pointed out the students who were more likely to experience these communication barriers and concluded with recommendations for overcoming the barriers.

Hatley, R. V., & Ritter J. R. (1981). Voting behavior can be influenced by school districts. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(2), 32.

There is definitely a potential for influencing the direction in which voters cast their ballots on financial referenda questions. The success of a school district in gaining voter support for increased financial resources seems to reside in its program for information dissemination and in its establishment of a well- planned, ongoing school-community relations program. This promotes positive attitudes among the general characteristics and attitudinal differences that can be associated with voters, non-voters, and yes and no voters in school financial elections.

McClellan, M. (1981). PR specialists are not a priority in overseas American schools. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(2), 32-33.

Only 19% of overseas administrators surveyed were willing to hire a part-time PR specialist and then only if the role included full-time teaching responsibilities. In contrast, 71% of these administrators realized a general need for improvement in school public relations in American overseas schools. Administrators believed that American overseas schools should have a PR program designed to inform the local community. They further stated that the local political situation was their most important consideration in deciding upon a public relation policy.

Gardner, D. W. (1982). One type of achievement report is misused. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(3), 36.

Misuse of achievement reports has resulted in poor communications between the school district and the community. The use of media was intended to improve communications of this kind, but misinterpretation of data resulted in just the opposite. Instead of simply providing information to school patrons, one such report generated an abundance of negative responses.

McMullen, S., & Oberg, T. (1982). Changes needed for increased TV coverage. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(3), 37.

A survey of school district officials shows that school public relations programs must place information into the video format to better utilize television. In addition, television news directors suggested increased involvement of school administrators in coverage of school affairs to provide for more newsworthy coverage.

Vaupel, Jr. C. F., & Sweat, J. P. (1982). Internal relations have the highest priority of secondary principals. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(3), 36-37.

An Arkansas survey shows internal relations has highest priority among secondary principals. This was reported to be most important in comparison to other issues, such as external communications with parents, students, and community.

Allen, H. C. (1982). PR training needed by community educators. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(4), 9.

Due to growing financial needs in education, many community educators now see a need for training in public relations. A national survey of educators resulted in a list of many factors that outlined this critical need. These educators clearly state the need for positive community communication.

Docherty, R. K., & Shoop, R. J. (1982). Attitudes can change after a one-hour presentation. *Journal of Education Communication*, 5(4), 10.

According to a survey of 45 Kansas superintendents, it is clear that a one-hour presentation can positively change an individual's attitude. Two strategies were utilized to attempt this change: The first with only a lecture and the second with both film and lecture. Neither strategy was found to be more significant than the other. However, attitude change did occur, but this change still did not assure implementation of the new concept.

Tierce, J. W. (1982). Volunteers strengthen school community relations. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 5(4), 8-9.


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# Guidelines

## *RELATIONS*-The Journal of Educational Public Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

### Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

### Style

Scholarly articles should be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association.

We prefer citations to be numbered sequentially in the text and then detailed following the article. An author can include references of related articles/book with address of publishers—in a separate list. We accept photographs, illustrations and tables as appropriate.

### Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657 (UPS address-1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011) 717-761-6620.

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## Cartoons

The cartoon in this issue is the work of Bern Sharfman (the idea) of Harrisburg, PA, and Ed King (art) of Honesdale, PA.

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# *Wisdom, Revisited*

## The Ten Commandments of Excellent Public Relations

by Thomas E. Robinson

- Judge all actions and decisions on the basis of how they will profit the common good, not special interests.
- Seek to remedy the causes of adverse consequences.
- Strive to bring students of various backgrounds into an interdependent, friendly community.
- To improve the image of education, stress the merit of the educator.
- Open schools and classrooms in every way possible so citizens can see the quality of services they support.
- In every school publication, ensure the absence of spelling, grammatical and language errors.
- Consider yourself as an appropriate model for student emulation.
- Make certain that the promise of education becomes reality.
- Become a member of a unified school community, with all educators and administrators imbued with the same institutional mission, objectives and identity.
- While serving the separation of church and state, continue to advance in every act such values as honor, honesty, compassion, reliability, kindliness and human relations.

The late Dr. Robinson was president of Glassboro State College where he initiated a master's program in school public relations in the 1960s. He wrote this for publication in the *Journal* in 1982.

# The Journal of Educational RELATIONS

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Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships ☞ Vol. 16 No. 3

BEST COPY AVAILABLE 82

# Notes From the Editor

## A revised name, the last one.

With this edition, we introduce the third and last, we hope, title for this publication. Starting in 1975, the title *Journal of Educational Communication* served us well. However, another company in the midwest challenged our use of it. Our attorneys said that we would probably prevail but only after a lengthy and costly fight. So in 1984 we changed to *The Journal of Educational Public Relations*.

In recent years, we became uncomfortable with the *public relations* term for several reasons:

- The trend in recent years in job titles is away from public relations to *community relations* or *communication*. A review of job titles in three states (Washington, Missouri and Pennsylvania) in a recent NSPRA directory showed 64 people using community relations or communications, 25 using public information and 19 using public relations.
- The term *public relations* has numerous definitions within the educational community, not to mention the public. I believe that many people consider the main goal of PR in education to be similar to PR in business and commerce, which is to provide information that will build goodwill and gain the support of target audiences. As such, administrators think of the public in public relations as parents and the citizenry and tend to overlook the internal publics such as students, teachers, the supporting staff, volunteers and the alumni who are, in many aspects, more important than external audiences.

To continue to use the public relations term in education costs all of us too much, in misunderstanding and an overall lack of clarity. No term may be adequate to refer to this aspect of educational operation to satisfy all. However, we have chosen to use The Journal of Educational Relations, with the sub-title, Promoting Student Achievement Through Home-School-Community Relationships, as complete of a description of our focus as we can devise.

## Different art, for a change.

We have used some out-of-print art from a variety of old sources as illustrations in this edition. The art is copyright free.

Albert E. Holliday
Editor

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by John Yantis

# Community Relations Start with the Internal School Climate

The internal climate of a school has much to do with the type and level of community relations a school enjoys. The author stresses the importance of educating the staff for the role climate plays in community relations and its impact within the school on the enhancement of that role. He also emphasizes the administrators' responsibility in developing a positive and motivating internal climate and provides some recommendations for doing so.

There is a close relationship between the internal social, psychological, and emotional environment of a school and the type of external relations a school has with its community. Low staff morale and poor personal relationships within the school quite often carry over to unsuccessful school-community relations. That is because dissatisfied staff members do not normally represent the school to the public in a way that leads to public confidence. To many people, the staff members of a school are the school; and if they portray a negative image through off-handed comments or actions, the public will have a tendency to portray the entire school in an unfavorable way. As Bagin, Gallagher and Kindred[1] note, school and community relations is the result of a constant flow of images from the school and its employees, and negative comments or actions project a negative image. Trust and confidence takes years to build and a moment to destroy.

A positive external relationship with the community starts within the school because an important factor that contributes to staff actions and comments, both positive and negative, is the internal climate in which they work. So establishing and maintaining a healthy working environment is the first step in developing positive participation by the entire staff in the school-community relations program.

## Administrators Need to be Pro-active

Excellent school and community relations is a well-planned and continuous endeavor. School administrators cannot routinely manage the schools and assume that a reactive approach to community relations will suffice. They must also recognize that the administration by itself cannot foster and maintain the level of community relationships that is necessary today. Effective administrators must undertake a proactive role in developing a total staff approach to community relations. In fact, when planning the community relations program a wise administrator will quite likely consider the staff first, knowing that a knowledgeable staff with a positive attitude can go a long way toward building a positive and realistic public image of the schools.

People in the business world know that for a business to be successful it must remain close to its customers. In many businesses the people who are closest to the customers are the sales and/or service personnel. Successful businesses invest in these people, training them well, involving them, listening to them, and praising them. They know that if these people are not

successful in dealing with the customers, the business will fail.

In schools it is the staff member, from teacher to the bus driver, who is closest to the customer. The wise school administrator will recognize and build upon that fact as the school-community relations team is developed and the program established.

*Each employee — administrator, teacher, support personnel, contracted worker — comprise a district's school-community relations "team" and public relations should be listed among their responsibilities in their job descriptions.*

## Involve the Staff

The staff who comprises the school-community relations team includes all those who are involved with the schools including the administrators, teachers, cafeteria workers, secretaries, bus drivers, para-professionals, custodians, and contracted workers. All of these people communicate about the schools to and with their neighbors, bridge partners, fellow club members, coffee shop patrons, and all the people they encounter. These staff members are seen as primary sources of information about schools and attitudes regarding school programs and systems. Therefore, all personnel must be kept informed through regular staff meetings and memos, and public relations should be listed among the responsibilities within their job descriptions[3].

## Start with Orientation

A good place to start to inform school employees of their respective roles in community relations would be during the *orientation* of new staff members. Since good relations with the community are so important to the success of schools today, time should be spent during the orientation to explain that importance and how the new employee can help. In fact, the employee should leave the orientation program with the strong belief that he/she is a integral part of the school-community relations team.

## Staff Development Must be Ongoing

The community relations component of staff roles should be included in ongoing *staff development* programs for all staff. Staff members need to learn what they can do to enhance public confidence in the schools and what the community relations consequences could be from positive or negative actions or comments by members of the staff. They also need to understand the reasons why it is important to strive for positive community relationships and how those relationships can have both short-term and long-term benefits for them as individuals. These may come in the form of such things as increased community support for additional teaching resources, better facilities, higher salaries, and reasonable class loads. Individual teachers may benefit from increased parental involvement as parents become more aware and supportive of the classroom environment and activities.

Staff development programs could include such things as how to suggest stories for news media coverage, how to get stories into the staff newsletter, how to work with the media, how to handle a crises, and for teachers, how to involve parents in the classroom, or how to conduct positive and meaningful parent-teacher conferences.

Many schools have some form of staff

development programs. However, studies have shown that there is a considerable difference between schools with excellent morale and those with poor morale in the way these programs are planned and conducted. In the schools with higher morale the teachers and staff were very much involved in planning these programs[4]. As staff members become attuned to their role in school and community relations they themselves will determine the kinds of things that should be included in staff development programs to help them with this role. Excellent resources are available to assist in preparing a staff development program in school-community relations[5].

## Share Information

Knowledge about programs and new directions must be shared with all staff, certified and uncertified. For example, if the custodian is somewhat knowledgeable about a new reading program that has just been implemented in the school he/she will be able to share information with his/her circle of contacts within the community. Further, this individual will feel as though he/she is an important member of the school team in carrying out the real work of the school, helping students achieve academically. It is also important that staff members learn of matters that affect them through internal communication and not by external sources such as the local news media.

Exchanging ideas among staff members can also be beneficial in fostering collegiality. Experienced teachers and other staff members have a wealth of information and experience with what works for them that they could share with others. Regular faculty meetings may provide just the right setting for instructional staff members to exchange tips regarding school-community relationship activities. This type of collegial sharing is very conducive to a positive internal atmosphere.

## Establish a Motivating Climate

Many factors affect the attitudes of school employees, a number of which can understandably have a negative impact or raise the level of anxiety. These range from violence within the schools to increasing demands from the public for more accountability on the part of the schools and calls for school reform. Change can cause fear and frustration for those who are affected by it and, consequently, can cause reactions that may have an adverse impact on school and community relations. Low morale

is usually associated with powerlessness, frustration, and alienation.

The administrator can help reduce this anxiety and its resulting stress on the staff by creating a climate that motivates. Yoemans[6] notes that people in such a climate radiate self-respect. They are knowledgeable about what is going on within the organization and what is expected of them. They feel a part of the organization because both their achievements and their concerns are acknowledged.

Fran Tarkenton[7], the former football star, also offers some good advice regarding motivation. He says that people do not change their behavior unless it makes a difference to them to do so, such as to gain a benefit or avoid a penalty. An administrator can cause change in behavior by manipulating the consequences of the behavior. This includes rewarding normal behavior as well as superior behavior. It is Tarkenton's belief that those in management must overcome the traditional view that people should not be rewarded for doing what they are supposed to do and move toward a policy of expending as much energy in keeping the up side up as keeping the down side down.

In order to establish and maintain this motivating environment that gives staff members a feeling of significance, they need to be recognized and rewarded for their contributions. Sometimes it is simply the human touch such as a letter of appreciation, a birthday card, or coffee and doughnuts when not expected that makes people feel appreciated and the job worth doing. However, in schools that have high morale, administrators find a variety of formal ways to praise individual staff members such as at PTA meetings, faculty meetings, school assemblies, and at graduation ceremonies.

Honest and *open communication* is crucial in establishing a climate that will affect positive attitudes. Levine and Crom[8] recommend that administrators *make* time to communicate with others. Often administrators are so busy with the routine management of the school they may tend to forget they are in a people-oriented business. Effective administrators get out of the office and communicate with staff members in the staff members' environment. Administrators who are trying to establish a positive internal climate will find time to spend in the classroom, lunchroom, playground, teachers' lounge and in other locations where easy interaction can take place. And as Levine and Crom also note, easy interaction does not just happen by accident. An *atmosphere of trust* must be established. That type of atmosphere is created by putting people at ease. This may be done by meeting people in their environment, showing a sincere interest in them, in what they are doing, and in their concerns.

*Employees in a climate that motivates them radiate self-respect. They feel they are a real part of the organization because their achievements and concerns are acknowledged.*

Once an atmosphere of trust has been created and staff members are open with their communication, it is important that people are not punished for saying what they are thinking. They should not be discouraged from risking communication again. If criticism is unavoidable, administrators should do so respectfully, constructively, and privately. But mistakes are part of progress, and

people need to know that simple mistakes will not be blown out of proportion. The willingness to take risks without fear of reprisal is an important aspect of this positive climate and has much to do with staff members' attitudes.

An administrator who wants to be successful in establishing a positive climate will also want to create a shared sense of purpose. As a leader a principal may share a vision, but excellent principals will involve the staff in developing a *shared vision* in which all feel committed. This shared commitment comes about when the staff have had an opportunity to be involved, to have had input, and to be kept informed. It develops when the staff feels as though their contributions are important, that they have been listened to, and that they are appreciated. In short, they feel as though they are truly important members of the educational team; and they know they have a major responsibility in meeting the goals of the team. This in part means developing and maintaining good school-community relations because they know the importance of such relations in school improvement and in carrying out the work of the school.

## Conclusion

Effective school administrators are pro-active in assuring all staff members know the importance of good school and community relations and what they can do to enhance those relationships. However, wise administrators understand that the internal climate in which the staff members work has much to do with their attitudes toward their jobs, the school, the system, and, therefore, community relations. To establish a working climate where people are involved, have a sense of purpose and personal achievement, are recognized for their work, and feel free to take risks and be open in their communication is certainly one of the more challenging tasks for educational leaders today. However, it can also be one of the most rewarding.

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by David Martinson

# School Public Relations:
# Do It Right Or Don't Do It At All!

I believe a genuine public relations effort should be a central component of the administrative strategy of our public schools. I put emphasis on the word genuine, however, because much of what passes as school public relations has nothing to do with authentic communication.

More specifically, one might suggest that, too often, school "public relations" has centered around: (a) amateurish attempts at keeping bad news out of the paper; and/or (b) efforts at prompting the superficial over the substantive. Put another way, "too much attention has been focused on the sideshows—athletics, baton twirling, school plays, social events--and too little attention on the show in the main tent"[1].

Instead, what needs to be implemented in our public schools and school districts is a genuine public relations program. In that line, school administrators need to understand:

1. The difference between publicity and genuine public relations;
2. The difference between a public relations program of "pure" advocacy and one facilitating mutual understanding;
3. That public relations is not limited to keeping "bad" news out of the newspaper;
4. That student publications are not direct or formal appendages of the school public relations program.

## Publicity vs. Public Relations

Far too many persons — not just school administrators — mistakenly perceive public relations as synonymous with publicity. This in unfortunate because "the fallacy of using publicity as a substitute for good performance or as a bandage to cover up an institutional score is repeatedly demonstrated"[2].

Too often, an effort to generate good publicity is seen as an antidote for a serious malignancy when the only genuine cure involves direct surgical intervention! Although use of publicity is not a negative per se, even when used legitimately, it is only one part of the *genuine* public relations program. That is true because "publicity is strictly a communications function, whereas PR involves a management function as well....The value of public relations lies in its power to serve as a two-way link and negotiator between an organization and its publics, to build understanding and resolve conflicts"[3].

In this line, it is critical that school administrators recognize that *genuine* public relations involves what has been identified as a four-step process: research, planning, communication, and evaluation"[4].

It is noteworthy that communication (publicity if one insists) encompasses only one segment of this process. In fact, two of the steps — research and evaluation — have much in common with traditional social science "number crunching." It might also be noted that "much of the impact and influence of public relations is best understood in the context of high quality media and communication research"[5].

In short, *genuine* public relations encompasses much more than writing a news release to publicize the latest good news about the school debate team. In genuine public relations, "the need for systematic research is critical and continuous"[6].

*Genuine* public relations is a continuous process that involves an effort to *understand* the concerns of relevant populations (students, parents, teachers, staff, taxpayers, etc.) and to **respond** to those concerns.

When most people think of public relations, images of unadulterated hype are probably the first thing to enter the mind. Unfortunately, even some who practice public relations "are still infected with the idea that public relations is essentially image building"[7].

They act as though "favorable impressions are to be made at almost any cost, no matter what the reality"[8].

One journalist argued "the bottom line in PR is to make the client look good. If, in a given instance, it happens that truth and desired image coincide, fine; but that is only a coincidental concern"[9].

*School administrators need to (adopt) a public relations strategy more attuned to mutual understanding than advocacy/persuasion...*

For that reason, it is useful to note, again that *genuine* public relations entails much more than sending out publicity releases telling the world everything is rosy. Public relations involves "conveying information back and forth until understanding is reached"[10].

The key word is *understanding*. Understanding — more precisely mutual understanding — is central to recognizing an evolution that is taking place in public relations, where emphasis is placed on "practitioners serv(ing) as mediators between organizations and their publics"[11].

The practitioner's role is defined not in terms of advocacy/persuasion but as the facilitator of a process that "consists more of a dialogue than a monologue"[12].

Interestingly, "if persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organization's management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the publics' attitudes or behavior"[13].

Clearly, this is a very different view of the purpose of public relations than that transmitted in the popular media. Many school administrators might even view it as revolutionary. In that, they would not be alone. Some who call themselves public relations practitioners refuse to accept it. On the other hand, school administrators need to recognize that in adopting a public relations strategy more attuned to mutual understanding than advocacy/persuasion, they will also be more effective in their communication efforts.

Research has shown "that 'telling' is erroneously seen as the essence of effective communication....effective communication is more realistically viewed as a situation in which two

persons or groups are able to clear up misconceptions and ambiguities....Merely 'telling,' without finding out what the other party wants or needs to be told, is a wasteful use of communication resources"[14].

Put succinctly, school administrators must recognize that "the public's increasing demand for school accountability requires a shift of emphasis away from publicity in school public relations. There is a need for representative nonintuitive feedback...(administrators) have to deal with the fact that feedback is costly and often brings unpleasant truths"[15].

*Genuine public realtions is a continuous process that involves an effort to understand the concerns of others (students, parents, teachers, etc.) and to respond to those concerns.*

Administrators need to respond to those truths by entering into a genuine communication exchange. Only then can they claim to be practicing public relations.

## What About "Bad" News?

It has been correctly noted that "there will always be some people in the business world who are convinced that all they need is a lawyer to keep them out of jail and a PR practitioner to keep bad news out of the paper"[16].

That is, however, precisely the wrong strategy to follow if one is interested in genuinely employing public relations to build relationships based on mutual understanding. Further, it is a strategy fraught with danger even if one does not subscribe to such a model. One journalist probably spoke for many in the press when he suggested that those charged with administering public relations programs who "feel the need to be evasive or untruthful with the media...have no call to complain when reporters run roughshod over them to get the truth"[17].

In this regard, school administrators would do well to study the career of one of the legendary figures in public relations, Ivy Lee. Operating at a time — the early 1900s — when big business judged itself exempt from any requirement that it respond to public questions, this practitioner "tried a radical approach.....he invited the press to ask questions"[18].

Instructive was how Lee reacted when a client — the Pennsylvania Railroad — had a train wreck. He "invited reporters to take a special car arranged for by the railroad to visit the scene and even take pictures. The Pennsylvania line was applauded in the press for the openness, and coverage of the railroad, which had been negative for years, began changing"[19].

That is not to say that the public school administrator concerned about implementing a genuine public relations program must shout everything he or she knows "from the highest mountain top!" One is concerned, however, that, too often, school administrators will err on the side of caution when it comes to the release of unfavorable information. If one is to speak about *authentic* communication with various publics, the scale should always be tipped in favor of disclosure, unless *clear* and *objective* circumstances are present which override that presumption.

Cleveland, while speaking directly to the tensions related to the application of sunshine laws in higher education, makes just such a point when he agrees that there should always be that presumption in favor of openness. He argues that "tendencies toward closure must be monitored closely, scrutinized strictly, and permitted only with narrowly

defined exemptions"[20].

Impacted publics have a right to that information — good and bad — which they need in order to make informed decisions. That is precisely what a newspaper editor was suggesting to school board members when he said, "Maybe if you really had debate on some of these problems....if you would invite in citizens to debate out the issues, it might be beneficial. It would be painful....but it is the only way in which to educate the American people in such a way that they can form an enlightened and intelligent public opinion"[21].

## PR and the Student Newspaper

There is not sufficient space in this article to address all the questions relevant to the role of student publications in the public school. Additionally, I have addressed these questions in depth in a number of other places [22,23].

In fact, the title of this article was inspired by an article I wrote on that subject —"An Open Letter to Public School Administrators: Student Newspapers: Do Them Right or Don't Do Them at All!"[24].

It is, however, necessary to emphasize again that student publications must not be viewed as formal tools in a school public relations program. Student newspapers — for better or worse — *should serve as conduits for student expression of student concerns.*

That is not to suggest that a genuine student newspaper cannot assist in building a school's favorable reputation. In fact, I would argue just the opposite. A genuine student newspaper — one free of heavy-handed administration censorship — can enhance a school's reputation among a number of key publics, most specifically, the student body itself.

But that must never be the direct objective of student publications. Student publications should play a leading role in what former Supreme Court Justice William Brennan saw as the public school's *obligation* "in preparing the Nation's youth for life in our increasingly complex society and for the duties of citizenship in our democratic Republic....(by conveying) to our young the information and tools required not merely to survive in, but to contribute to, civilized society"[25].

Unfortunately, "the thrust of the empirical research seems to indicate that schools have little if any effect on teaching of the democratic creed or political values in general"[26].

This is explained by "the existence of the 'hidden curriculum' — the informal and decidedly anti-democratic set of teaching practices and power relationships by which the school operates....the disjuncture between the democratic creed and what actually goes on in school tends to inhibit political learning"[27].

Clearly, public school administrators concerned about implementing a

genuine public relations program emphasizing mutually satisfactory two-way communication would not, at that same time, want to contribute to the furtherance of this "hidden curriculum."

## Conclusions

For many people, public relations is synonymous with words like cover-up, obfuscate, misrepresent, and lie. Even some of those who hire public relations persons "look upon PR people as organizational firefighters or troubleshooters. When disaster strikes, the public relations firefighters, otherwise left to play checkers, are summoned by an alarm to speed the rescue"[28].

School administrators concerned about implementing a genuine public relations program must reject such thinking. The techniques of public relations should not be used simply as tools in a misguided effort to make the administrator, school, or school district look good.

Public relations can serve well the administrator who is interested in entering into a genuine dialogue with the variety of publics who have a direct interest in public education.

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### Editor's Note:

Professor Martinson writes about school public relations from a different perspective, one that may be shared by many in the academic community, who in turn have a hand in developing graduate programs in school public relations for administrators. I use the term different as you'll notice that all of his references are to authors and publishers outside of the mainstream we in the educational community are used to seeing (such as Bagin and Gallagher, Dorothy Rich, Fenwick English, Larry Decker, Theodore Kowalski, B. Dean Bowles, William Banach, Mel Heller, NSPRA, AASA, and this Journal).

The professor, through his many citations, makes a number of excellent points worthy of consideration at the practitioner as well as the academic level.

David L. Martinson is a professor in the school of journalism and mass communications at Florida International University, (North Miami Campus, North Miami, FL 33181). This article is reprinted from Contemporary Education, published by the School of Education, Indiana State University, School of Education, SE 1005, Terre Haute, IN 47809, at $12 a year for individuals, $16 for institutions. Add $3 for foreign.

by Marilyn M. Hart

# Polish Your Board's Image—

## Would a first-time attendee at a meeting of your board gain a positive or negative image?

Rude. Condescending. Argumentative. Calm and organized. There are some of the adjectives future teachers used to describe attitudes displayed by board members at board meetings the students had been assigned to attend.

Have you ever wondered how your board appears to the public? More specifically, have you ever thought about the impression you as an individual make on members of the audience who are attending their first school board meeting? Board members can readily recognize those who attend regularly — the teachers' union representatives, the PTA representatives, local "watchdog" taxpayers or small groups lobbying for or against some special interest. As a former member of a regional high school board, I often wondered what impressions we were making on first-time attendees.

It was after I became a professor at Kean College that I found some answers to my questions. I teach students who are majoring in education. One of the objectives of the course is that they understand the principles of curriculum development and the forces impacting on curriculum revision and evaluation.

A few years ago, when I mentioned in class that local school boards must approve the curriculum, I was surprised to discover that none of the students had ever attended a board meeting. Some even thought "outsiders" were not permitted to attend! That discovery resulted in a new addition to the course requirements.

For the past four semesters, I have required students to attend a school board meeting in a district of their choice. As most of the students came from the north central portion of the state, the boards which they visited also represent the same geographic area, both urban and suburban.

The only directions given to the students for the observation were to telephone any school board office to determine meeting dates, attend the meeting, pick up an agenda and note the percentage of time spent on curricular issues during the course of the meeting.

My objective for assigning the observation were that students would:

- Understand how a school board functions and the reasons for open public meetings and executive sessions;
- View curriculum development in a "real world" setting and not just from the classroom or textbook; and
- Understand the importance of citizen participation in support of public education in New Jersey.

One hundred fifty-four students attended meetings in 43 different school districts, both elementary and secondary. Of the 43 different boards observed, only nine could be characterized as providing positive images to the public. Unfortunately, about 80 percent of the students' observations were categorized as contributing to a negative perception of school boards.

The results of the observations each semester were discussed in small groups in class and then summarized. One observation common to both negative and positive perceptions was that of poor attendance at the meetings.

"I was the only member of the audience," said one student. As any school board member knows, board meetings don't usually draw large audiences unless there is an item on the agenda that interests the community, students or teach-

ers, such as salaries, sports or band uniforms, a cancelled class trip or a school closing.

Prior to the class discussions and summaries, students were asked to respond to two questions in their groups: What did you *expect* to see and hear at the board meeting? What did you *actually see* and hear at the board meeting?

Their observations were grouped into three areas: organization or structure of the meetings, agenda content; and attitudes of the board members to each other and to the public.

The *expectations* summarized in order of frequency mentioned — from most to least — included a formal organization; discussion on various topics, debates over issues, details about courses and curriculum, more parents in attendance; more teacher involvement and respect for the public.

The *actualities* summarized in order of frequency mentioned — from the most to least — were conflict among board members, conflicts between board members and the public; lack of community support; unresolved issues; voting rapidly on agenda items; interesting, orderly well-structured meeting, and discussions on specific issues of safety in the schools.

**Some Positive Reactions**. It was gratifying to learn that some students attended meetings at which members of the public thanked the board for caring for the football field and voting on a new school library. Others attended meetings at which High School Proficiency Tests and other achievements were topics of interest. Some students reported that board members spoke to them after the meeting and expressed a great deal of interest for their assignment and encouraged them to come to future meetings.

There is no single formula for conducting a well-organized school board meeting. There are too many different districts with varying needs; just as there are multiple personalities serving on boards.

Recommendations. The following are some recommendations resulting from observations; recommendations that might help boards make better impressions on first-time attendees.

- Publicize board meetings to a greater extend — don't rely only on the published notices as required by the Open Public Meetings Act.
- Consider having an official "greeter" at public meetings to welcome attendees and distribute the agenda at the same time. A student organization could be responsible for this.
- At the beginning of the meeting, explain that if the issues seem to be voted upon with speed, it is because they have been the subject of lengthy discussion at a prior work session.
- Devote at least five or ten minutes of each public meeting sharing something positive about the schools, the students, the teachers or other staff members.
- Agree to disagree with each other in a professional manner. If an issue is unresolved, give the public a probable date when it will be discussed again.
- Treat the public with respect and insist that they show the board the same consideration.
- At least three times a year, at the public meetings, mention to the audience that, although you are an elected official, you have volunteered for the position and that no salary is attached.

By putting into practice just a few of these recommendations, you might even notice greater attendance at your local board meetings!

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by Patricia Kramer

# Foster Self-Esteem To Keep Kids Safe and Sound

A few months ago, my alma mater in Washington, DC, installed metal detectors at its entrance. It would be bad enough if they were put there to protect students from outside assailants, but sadly many of the assailants were inside the school walls. Today, schools across the country have security guards, police officers, guard dogs and now metal detectors in the name of safety and protection.

What have our schools become? And what will become of our schools—and our students? It is not only our children's physical well-being that is in jeopardy. Our children's psychological well-being is equally being threatened by the many social ills plaguing children and their families today. Protecting their bodies is not enough if their emotional side shuts down or is destroyed? Students are total beings — not minds and bodies operating independently of each other.

Our society often seems to adopt quick fixes in response to crises when it is usually too little, or too late to have any impact. Education in America has become a crisis-oriented response to problems. Could it be that the ills that have been identified as problems are actually just symptoms of far greater wounds which cannot be healed because somebody decides to put a bandage on them?

More young people may be dying from the pervasive disease called hopelessness from guns, knives, overdoses, drug- and alcohol-related deaths or suicide. Clearly, physical safety is important. Students have the right to expect to be protected. We must do whatever is necessary to assure that when students enter the halls of learning, they're safe and well cared for. But shouldn't we be doing more to make our schools a safe haven where students feel supported, nurtured and welcome?

Several years ago, Mary Futrell, former president of the National Education Association, wrote that she was convinced that a large problem within our schools is "the problem of emotional neglect, a problem as potentially devastating as physical neglect or even physical abuse. Students striving to cope in an often icy and impersonal world need help. And providing that help demands reevaluating-then strengthening-the counseling services our schools offer."

Although school personnel agree that students are struggling more and more with personal and family problems, budget cuts have reduced some guidance staffs by half. Often, those counselors who remain are so overwhelmed by paper work and career counseling that they literally don't have time to deal with students' personal problems. School psychologists are often too busy administering tests and one social worker may be assigned to handle the problems of students in three, four and even five schools.

*Shouldn't we be doing more to make schools a safe haven where students feel supported, nurtured and welcome?*

This condition persists despite studies that continually reveal that young people consumed by personal problems have difficulty concentrating and absorbing material, which in many cases result in low academic scores. Chronic stress such as that caused by an unhappy home situation can have a major impact not only on children's intellectual abilities, but also may increase the likelihood that they will act out in destructive ways.

## Whose Responsibility is it?

Some believe that it is the parents' responsibility — not the school's — to handle these problems. Few would disagree that teaching values, morals and appropriate behavior is the parents' responsibility. And many parents do. But in a society that has such rigorous training requirements for doctors, lawyers, plumbers and electricians, how can be continue to expect people to successfully reach adulthood without help? Why do we expect teens to take on the most difficult, challenging and long-term job of being partners in all types of relationships — friendships, marriage, business or parents — without one moment of training.

Noted psychologist David Elkind says that parents who truly care about their children are "so involved in reordering their own lives, managing a career, marriage, parenting and leisure that they have no time to give their teenagers. Other parents simply cannot train a teenager for an adulthood they themselves have yet to attain fully." Parents can't teach what they never learned themselves! Parents often want and need help to restore direction and discipline to their children's lives.

Educators no longer can take the same path that they've been traveling for years. School administrators cannot continue to live in a world that was, while our youth continue to live in a world that is: a world full of free sex, substance abuse, violence and record numbers of young people living in single-parent families.

## Prevention is the Key

For years, school administrators have come up with more and more of what seems to be solutions — suicide-prevention programs, watered-down sex education classes, drug and alcohol-treatment pro-

grams — and still the problems live on. We need to provide students with an overall approach to a more productive lifestyle. Prevention is the key — not intervention a day late and a dollar short!

Creating that approach starts with the quality of the time students spend in the school and classroom. Quality means standards of respect, courtesy, care and concern, involvement, acceptance of others, cooperation, etc. A positive environment will add to academic, social and emotional growth and will decrease negative behavior while increasing learning.

How teachers relate to and respond to students often determines the quality of the classroom environment.

*Students need teachers who:*

- Are secure and hold themselves in high self-esteem. Studies show that adults with high self-esteem develop children who are confident, trusting and motivated. Simply put, teachers with high self-esteem bring out the best in children.
- Can establish a forum in which students will listen to each other and will share their own experiences so that they each can see that he or she is not alone in their feelings or dilemmas.
- Can show them that there are options and alternatives that work — that they do indeed have choices about the way they act and respond.
- Are able to talk and teach about real issues relevant to their everyday lives.
- Are empathic listeners and sensitive to their students' feelings without judging or condemning them.

*Action Steps to Consider*

If educators really want to keep children "safe," here are some things they can do:

- Implement life-skills programs that will help students find ways to handle problems in constructive ways. These need not be programs that infringe on parental roles. Learning self-esteem, communication and coping skills and universal issues from which everyone —no matter what their color, religion, or ideology — can benefit. One such program is "The Dynamics of Relationships" (see end of article for more information).
- Adopt a new set of 3Rs. The new ones should be: Respect, Responsibility and Relationships.
- Take students seriously; trust them; listen to them; accept them unconditionally and make them feel that they belong.
- Invite students to learn. Young people must recognize that their success is tied to their education.
- Be attractive, clean and well-kept so students can enjoy and be proud of their environment.
- Allow students to help establish rules and share in the responsibility of seeing them followed. Students must become part of the solution, not thought of as the problem.

*The bottom line message that students should get from their institutions of learning is that not only is their education important, but so are they.*

Educational reform is the buzz term of the '90s, but the most important educational reform is about saving our children's lives. It is our responsibility to quip students with the necessary life skills that will ultimately keep them safe from harm.

Patricia Kramer is director of the Self Esteem Institute (14526 Bongo Terrace, Silver Spring, MD 20906 — 800-438-0081). She is the author of "The Dynamics of Relationships - A Guide for Developing Self Esteem and Coping Skills," a program for grades K-12. She conducts staff development and parent workshops at schools in North America. This article is reprinted from PTA Today, published by the National PTA, 700 N. Rush St., Chicago, IL 60611-2571.

by Mel Heller and Margaret Lundquist

# A Recipe for Committee Failure—

## Even Dorothy Had Trouble Following the Yellow Brick Road

Plato said that democracy has inherent problems because too many people who do not know what is happening have a voice in government. Schools officials and legislators cling to the assumption that committees are fundamental to the existence of every successful school and school district.

School reform efforts, especially those resulting from mandates and approaches focusing on governance, have not proven that committee involvement leads to school improvement. However, the myth of committees lives on. Mythologists in government have incorporated committee involvement as part of national goals in America 2000.

If committees must be used, their members should be carefully selected, structured, and directed. To this end, we offer the ideal composition of a committee **guaranteed to derive the least value from its operation:**

• **The Self-Important Chairperson.** Great care must be exercised in the selection of a chairperson. The ability to ramble is a prerequisite for the position. Be certain that person has an overload of tasks, including additional committee assignments. It is helpful if the individual has meager organizational ability and has not yet mastered the skill of delegation. Being verbose, random-abstract, pompous, and egocentric are desirable traits. These characteristics will ensure that there will be no prolonged discussions except when the chairperson is speaking.

• **The Non-Change Agent.** This member is interested in maintaining the status quo as it was at the turn of the century. Black and white are the person's favorite colors. To admit to a shade of gray would be to destroy this person's thinking. What was good for the individual's grandparents is good for the children of today and tomorrow. Change, innovation, and reform are not part of this member's vocabulary. One benefit from this person is that other members have practice in rolling their eyes, casting side-long glances, and taking deep breaths. This person insists on "my way or the highway" or the dirt road that the old folks used.

• **The Philosopher.** One committee member should be a self-proclaimed philosopher. This resident intellectual will know the best philosophy of education and will be able to share it with other committee members in the most irrelevant, impractical, pseudoscholarly fashion possible. The more obscure the philosopher, the more scholarly the presentation will appear. This person's role is to educate the board and to impress those who read the minutes of the meetings. Such pontification cannot only educate the other members, but also allow them to catch up on needed sleep. If the committee meetings are taped or televised, the philosopher will be a star performer.

• **The Single Issue Member.** The single issue committee member has a clear priority — a vested interest. No matter what else may be important, one single burning issue is the motivating force of this member to keep discussions on that issue. (If another member on the committee has a conflicting issue, fireworks are guaranteed.) A committee member with this driving force may not be myopic but will try to gloss over topics other than the vested interest or relate everything else to the pet topic. This individual is a master of the phrase "apropos of nothing."

• The Paragon of Tenacious Tunnel Vision. The committee member with tunnel vision cannot see beyond one's nose. This type of person may believe that judgment is based on knowledge, but everything is related to personal experience. "I know a teacher who...," "My cousin said...," "In my business we...," are typical points of reference. Whatever the discussion, the implications are lost on the narrow focus of the dark tunnel. This type of colleague is an excellent unwitting ally in creating diversions and roadblocks.

• The Semanticist. This champion of clarity can ruin any committee work. Nothing escapes the attention of this person except the main idea of whatever is under discussion. Never responsible for results, this nitpicker can demand "better" word choices and "clearer" meanings. Sometimes the semanticist will offer alternatives to the wording of a statement, but usually merely challenges the word choice of others. Substance is secondary to semantic quibbling, the trademark of a word crafter.

If, in spite of this cast of characters, the committee works well, further recommendations are given to guarantee failure.

• Obfuscate the mission or purpose of the committee. If committee members know what their goals and objectives are, they might do a speedy and efficient job. Using the baseball strike model, meetings are held to determine dates for future meetings, a sufficiently nonproductive and time-consuming activity. Tangential discussions on the vague missions or purposes put time management to shame and provide opportunities for hidden agenda concerns to emerge. The perpetuation of superfluous discussions give life blood to committees. Meaningless tasks can be assigned for busy work leading to an unknown target.

• Do not set time limits for meetings. As committee meetings are opportunities for members to posture and preen, there is never enough time to participate meaningfully. If a meeting is brief or is held to a time schedule, the results may be productive, and, thus, counterproductive to the members' egos.

• Be sure the topic given to the committee has been previously studied by another committee with the results buried in the archives. Keep the present committee in the dark to insure repetition of effort and results. Form yet another committee as soon as possible and repeat the cycle.

• Provide an environment conducive to newspaper reading, needle-pointing, and comfortable chairs for dozing. Creative use of lighting land ventilation may enhance or impede the work of the committee.

The above ingredients for committee composition and activity will successfully assist you in achieving an absolutely fruitless and confusing objective.

Clearly, productive committees are invaluable to administrators. Unfortunately, many committee members are experts in the circular process, often ignoring Point A leading to Point B. Committees need focus and guidance rather than being sent off with little direction. The absence of a professional, educational purpose leads to time-wasting, verbiage, and aimlessness. Even Dorothy had trouble following the yellow brick road. Personal, petty, and preening needs of committee members — and of those who select and guide them — must be set aside to achieve the real goal of school improvement.

Administrators who have committees that function well may not need advice. For those who acknowledge that committees can be improved, the message is clear.

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by Jethelyn Gregory

# Building the Power to Pull Parents into the School: The Hugo Elementary Story

Hugo Elementary School is located in a poor county of our state, one that has the highest percentage of food stamp recipients. Yet, it has received more than its share of recognition.

For example, in October 1993, Choctaw County was visited by Oklahoma's Governor David Walters and his cabinet to attend community meetings and lunches, and tour all the local schools. They began the visit by attending our school's morning program, Rise and Shine.

About two months later, as I was watching the governor deliver his State of the State Address on television, I was surprised to hear, "Not all of our education problems are solved. But when I leave this Capitol and go to Hugo, and walk through their modern new elementary school, and watch those kids in Principal Jethelyn Gregory's sunrise program, ...I realize that a great good has happened, the kind that few states can match."

At the local Rotary Club meetings, I have heard the president and other members say, "If you haven't been over to visit Hugo Elementary's Rise and Shine, you're missing a real treat."

New visitors to town are regularly brought to the elementary's morning program by community members, and the local hospital's recruitment personnel bring prospective medical staff to visit as a means of attracting them to our community.

Rise and Shine is a tool to bring parents into the school building. Research supports a common denominator in successful students: It is not so much socioeconomic status but the parents' consistent support of education that ensures success. And one of the first steps of involvement is to just pull the parents into the school building. This program does that. It is a beginning to include parents successes. Scheduled from 8:20 to 8:45 a.m., the timing is suitable for many busy parents. They feel comfortable visiting, and are always introduced by their children, so it is a time of recognition for the child and the parent. Events are announced during this 25-minute period, the students, teachers, and parents are kept current with school activities. We regularly have eight to 10 parents in our morning program.

Beginning the second semester, Rise and Shine is video-taped on Wednesdays and shown over cable television. This enables the community to relate with the school.

## Celebrating Success and Recognizing Students

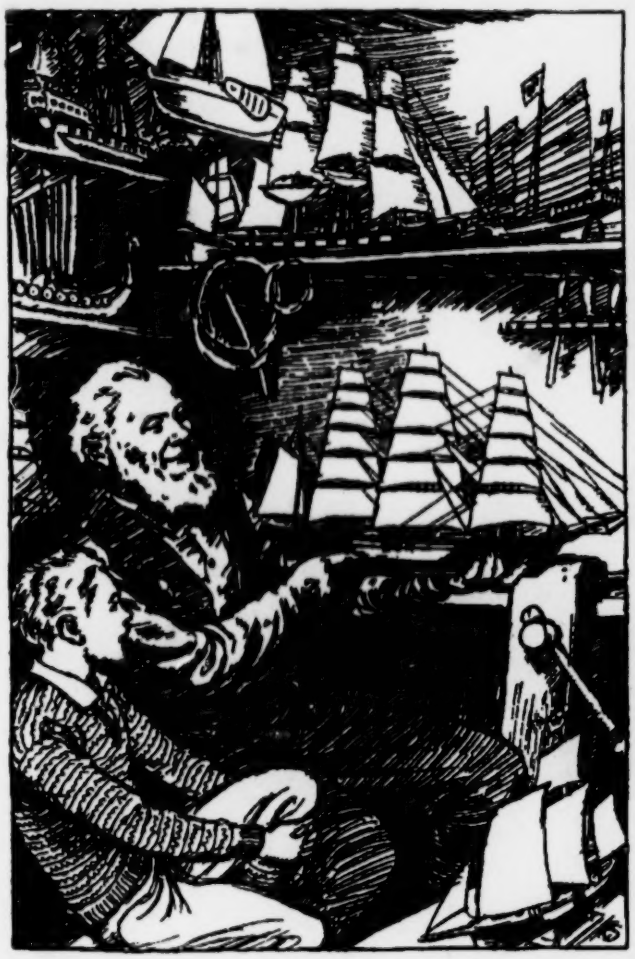
It's also important to celebrate your school's successes and recognize individual children's successes positively. Every day, we acknowledge children for such actions and events as outstanding behavior in a classroom, winning ribbons at the county fair, having a new baby cousin, contributing responsibility for picking up paper on the playground, or writing a poem. We have a drawing of Success Notes on Fridays. The parents of children who are identified during the week as being successful are sent a postcard describing the student's success. Before the postcard is mailed, a small tab is attached and put in a hopper from which the drawing is made.

Each day, a different student reporter from each grade gives the Rise and Shine

audience a report. Fifth grade is in charge of the weather report; fourth grade a quote; third, the lunch menu; second, a joke. This is structured so that each child in Hugo Elementary has at least one chance to be a school reporter during the year. Each day, a team of students readies the microphone, overhead projector, and stage.

The children regularly share their poetry and talents with the group, and because we meet daily, they become quite comfortable performing before an audience. Students often come to me asking to share their poems at Rise and Shine time.

There is an effort by all the teachers to recognize each child in some way during the year. For example, the counselor has developed Goodwill and Environmental teams. The criteria for membership in these two groups is self identification and no involvement in other school activities. Part of each team members' activity is to recognize responsibly acting students at Rise and Shine. This has broadened our outreach to include a wider variety of students to be recognized.



## Creating a Sense of Community

One of the main reasons for instigating a morning program was to develop a sense of community for the teachers and students. Our school was recently built to take the place of five older, neighborhood elementary schools. At the beginning, many rivalries and loyalties had to be redirected. We needed to become an entity that cared about everyone. Communication and music were used as avenues to help us grow in this area. We not only recognize successes, but also birthdays and beneficial, helpful activity. We are also a singing community. Folk songs, pops, mo-town favorites, and silly songs are among the selections and during

the last weeks of school, we vote on our favorite tunes. Then on the final days, we have a song countdown, performing the 10th choice down to the number one favorite.

## Developing Character and Respect

A target goal at Hugh Elementary School is to form skills in caring for self and others. Our school creed, recited daily, sets a model for our everyday performance. The teachers devised this avowal from a creed originated by Marva Collins, a black educator from Chicago.

"I am bright. There is nothing I cannot do. Yesterday's failures are behind me. Today's successes are yet before me. I will make today the very best of all because this day begins the rest of my life."

As a faculty, we believe if we are going to make a difference with children, we need to model and teach the principles on which our nation was founded. Students speak about the responsibility of voting for class officers who have the necessary qualities for each position. We talk about integrity as the way you act when no one is looking. Students who turn in lost articles and money are recognized for their honesty. Rise and Shine is planned to model, recognize and build character. As teachers, we try to model excellence and to expect excellence. The students work on modeling excellence in their performance. We agree with Oklahoma State School Superintendent Sandy Garrett, "It is imperative that we do not graduate morally illiterate students."

Rise and Shine is a wonderful program to build character, recognize achievements and involve parents and the community. It is also a lot of fun and is sure to start each day with a smile.

Jethelyn Gregory is principal of Hugo Elementary School (HC 64, Box 283, Ft. Towson, Oklahoma 74735).

Case Study

# Pie in the Face—A "Pride in Education" Volunteer Program Reveals a Hidden Ingredient in the Recipe

by Terry J. Oberg

Springtime had come. Birds were singing. Flowers were blooming. A warm, joyful spirit was in the air and the sun was shining. But in Wilbur, Texessee, the atmosphere was cold, and a dark pall hung over the city as students' scores on the state's competency test — the Texessee Education Agency Test (TEA Test) — were once again below the state's acceptable level. Now the school district could lose its accreditation if the situation didn't improve and fast.

In searching for reasons for the failures, it would have been simple to blame the low scores on frequent scapegoats like a large minority population or adverse economic conditions or inadequate facilities. But that was impassible in Wilbur, a prosperous bedroom community of the state capital. Most of the district's patrons were middle to upper class whites who lived there and worked in business, industry, education or government. A small, poor black neighborhood did exist on the west side of town and some Hispanics, including a few recent immigrants, lived in a settlement south of town. But test scores of the minority children had been similar to those of the white students. The district's high school, two junior high schools, and six elementary schools were all relatively new, and all in fine shape. So most people could find no excuse except the district's leadership.

Ray Rhodes, Wilbur schools' pleasant but ineffective superintendent for over a decade, had retired early because of the first set of low TEA Test scores. Dr. Lester Moore, an assistant superintendent from a prominent school district in the Northeast was selected to replace Rhodes. Moore's promise was to transform the Wilbur schools into a system with the prominence of his former district.

Within the first two weeks, Moore—with the board's blessing—reorganized the district's administrative staff. He added several new positions at the central office level to deal with curriculum and instruction, planning to focus on the areas that the state had targeted for TEA Testing. The new positions were filled with some of Moore's associates from his former district. (Moore and his associates would later become referred to by many locals as "the alien invasion.")

Moore and his team of administrators focused on an extremely rigid system of testing, prescriptive teaching, and intricate lesson plans which became known as "the system." To implement the system, the teachers were subjected to great doses of inservice training on how to diagnose and use the results for teaching. As part of the system, principals and supervisors began a routine of frequent walk-throughs to observe and document all that was happening in the classrooms. Teachers who had a warm relationship with their campus administrators previously began to resent the gestapo tactics that the alien invasion used in operating the system. Teacher morale throughout the district plummeted.

Moore and the school board had pleaded for time, saying that the results would justify the means. But when the results finally arrived, they were slightly below the scores of the previous year.

However, in spite of the unrest in the community and the school staff, the school board, perhaps afraid of losing face, stood behind

## Case Study

Moore. As a result, many teachers and administrators resigned to seek positions elsewhere during the summer. This meant numerous new faces in district classrooms and administrative offices added to the memory of the previous year's failed promise, generating a great deal of apprehension in the schools—and the community in general—as Moore's second year in Wilbur began.

Signs of trouble resurfaced in October when the results of a practice TEA Test showed student scores to be terrible. Moore reacted by putting pressure directly on the teachers through a renewed emphasis on the highly-structured curriculum which had caused so much discontent the year before. Once again principals and district administrators were accused of gestapo tactics. And many lengthy in-service sessions were scheduled to integrate the teachers into the system.

The general unrest created a major morale problem on school campuses that spilled over into the community. Initially, this took the form of angry words spoken in small groups. Later, opposition to Moore began to appear as letters-to-the-editor in the Wilbur Legend, and a small group, Save Our Schools (SOS) was organized and made its presence known. But Moore and the school board stood firm, claiming that the results would vindicate their actions.

When the results arrived from the spring TEA Test, Wilbur district's scores in almost every area and at every school were lower than they had been the previous year — in some cases, dramatically lower. A letter from the state education agency accompanied the results stating that the district would be monitored the following year to see why achievement was so low. The district was also warned of a possible change in accreditation status from acceptable to probationary.

What had been a rumble of unrest became a roar of outrage. The Save Our Schools group issued a message loud and clear: Our educational ship is sinking and the captain is to blame. Letters-to-the-Editor became frequent, most highly critical of the superintendent. Playing on his name, one correspondent wrote that "He promised more; we got less." Another noting his penchant of signing his name "Dr. Lester Moore, Ed.D.," referred to a 1950-60s television show in writing, "Wilbur Pool had Mr. Ed, the talking horse; Wilbur, Texessee has Dr. EDD, the talking mule." Bumper stickers were everywhere urging the SOS group's slogan, "We need less Moore." Finally accepting failure, Moore submitted his resignation, effective June 1.

The school board immediately appointed a search committee comprised of the principal of the high school, the president of one of the town's banks, the editor of the Wilbur Legend, a prominent civic leader, and a professor from the university in the state capital, all male, all white. With the problems facing the district, most people expected the committee to select an established, prominent superintendent from a smaller successful school district since there were several such districts in the area. So it came as a great surprise when the committee announced its choice, a person almost the exact opposite of from their expectations, a young, black, female high school principal from a small community in east Texessee.

Janet Atlanta had not applied for the job, because she was aware of Wilbur's demographics and educational problems. She also believed that the district would not consider anyone without a doctorate and at least assistant superintendent experience. The high school principal on the committee had nominated her based on what she knew of Janet from their mutual work in the state principal's association, and the record Atlanta had established while transforming her campus from a low-performing status to one of the top schools in the state. The other members of the committee were so impressed with her that they presented her name to the

school board as the only nominee. And the school board had followed suit, naming her Wilbur's next superintendent unanimously.

Her personal motto was "It happens in the classroom," and though she believed in keeping a low personal profile, she did not hide from work. Atlanta began immediately to meet with the administrators in the district, clearly indicating that she wanted them all to stay and that she had the highest expectations of them. She made it a point to learn their past service records and opened conversations with them by mentioning their past successes, emphasizing that she hoped they would work to recreate those successes. She also met with small groups of teachers, parents, other community leaders, and students to investigate their views and instill confidence that matters should improve quickly!

*Students' scores on the state's competency test were once again below the acceptable level; the district was in danger of losing accreditation.*

One of her first acts was to select Roland Hayes as public relations director. Hayes came from a district with a strong public relations program that not only publicized the school system but developed a strong community support program, a priority for Superintendent Atlanta.

Hayes, in the same manner as Superintendent Atlanta, moved quickly. He made the rounds of the social and service clubs, chamber of commerce, churches, and other organizations in the community promoting the positive aspects of the school system. He also sought input from the community, and then began organizing a key communicators network.

To deal with the media, he invited the general managers of the local and capital city radio and television stations as well as the Legend editor to a general briefing. He promised to keep all media representatives appraised of district happenings, from the mundane to the unique. When they left the meeting, the general managers and the editor agreed among themselves that a new day was dawning on the educational scene in Wilbur under the new superintendent.

Atlanta and Hayes made a special effort to pump up the teachers' morale as the beginning of the school year approached. Atlanta spoke only positively at the district's opening staff meeting, calling for formation of a district-wide faculty advisory committee to help her make decisions and, ultimately affect student achievement. Then both she and Hayes visited all of the campuses during the next few days. Soon, teachers and school patrons were expressing a positive attitude toward the school's and district's chances of improving the TEA Test scores.

After the school year was smoothly underway, Hayes set about adding to the PR program by promoting the need for community involvement in the schools. Stressing the community's professional background and the concern for the school he had heard during his contacts, he enlisted the help of many community leaders in forming Pride in Education (PIE) to bring the public into the schools. The organization's motto was "Give Wilbur's students a bigger piece of the PIE: Volunteer in YOUR school."

The response for volunteers was tremendous. Retirees and homemakers volunteered for several hours a day on a daily basis; college students offered their services as their schedules allowed; businesspeople donated an hour or so a week; and some businesses even sent employees on company time. The volunteers served as playground monitors, clerical helpers, classroom aides, tutors, and duty performers for teachers.

## Case Study

At the high school, one of the most popular volunteer programs was provided by a fraternity from the nearby state university. The young collegians came to the school well-dressed, worked diligently and appeared to be having great success. Not only were many students seeking their help (which might have been explained by their attractiveness to the younger students), but teachers reported that the tutored students were performing much better. The total volunteer program apparently was having a notable impact in the schools which in turn was creating a positive attitude in the community.

*Teachers who had a warm relationship with their campus administrators previously began to resent the gestapo tactics of the "the system."*

Hayes' and the superintendents' PR program was riding a crest of success. Their dedicated work, coupled with dramatically improved scores on the fall practice TEA Test, focused the students, parents, teachers, and community in general on a successful outcome in the spring. By January, there was such great confidence in the schools, and teacher morale was so improved, that the school board recognized Superintendent Atlanta for the district's obvious turnaround by extending her contract for an additional year. She, in turn, praised her staff and the students for their efforts, directing attention to Hayes for his work, especially for establishing and developing the PIE program.

Then late one afternoon in March, just before the TEA Test was to be administered, Hayes received a call from Superintendent Atlanta to come to her office immediately. As he walked into her office, he saw that she was not smiling. In addition, the chief of police was there and the high school principal. In perhaps the most emotion-packed dozen words he had ever heard her speak, she barely whispered to him, "Some volunteers were caught selling drugs to our high school students."

The police chief's voice carried authority, "An informant has leaked information about some of the college fraternity volunteer using their student tutoring sessions as a front for selling drugs to your high school students. Our undercover operation, with the high school principal's cooperation, has confirmed the allegations. Eight of the tutors have already been arrested, and we expect more any moment. We already have school students in custody. The news media already knows of the drug sales and arrests, and I wouldn't be surprised if some of the media wasn't already on the way here.

Hayes and Atlanta stared silently at each other. Finally it was Hayes who spoke, "After all our work and progress, it looks like we wind up with PIE in the face."

Atlanta managed a weak smile and then voiced what Hayes was thinking, "What did we do wrong? What could we have done differently? What can we tell the newspaper, the television stations, and the radio station— all of which have supported us so well? And what can we do now?"

The next moment was interrupted by an intercom buzzer and Atlanta's secretary announcing to the office "A television reporter is here and wants to see you. What shall I tell her?"

Terry J. Oberg is an assistant principal in the Rio Grande City Consolidated Independent School District, Rio Grande City, Texas. A response to this case study will appear in the next *Journal*.

Research

# Higher Education Training is Deficient in Parent Involvement Subject Matter

By James R. Young and Steven J. Hite

Studies confirm that most educators have had very little to no pre-service training during their university schooling in specific ways to involve parents.

Educators realize the importance of the teacher-parent relationship, but their pre-service training has focused mainly on subject matter and teaching strategies, with little preparation in the socio-political realities of the school setting, including effective interaction with parents. Research about pre-service training in parent involvement for administrators is essentially absent from the current literature. Educators continue to approach the parent involvement issue in isolation without the benefits of a shared literature base.

This article is a condensed version of a report of a national study to describe the status of pre-service teacher/administrator programs in preparing for parent involvement. This report gives a detailed analysis of the parent involvement curriculum taught by university pre-service teacher/administrator programs across the nation.

The results of this national study clearly indicate that universities have much to do to enhance their curriculum to integrate both concept and skill training content dealing with parent involvement. Of the 972 responses (69% of the sample) to the national survey 116 came from administrators preparation, 396 from secondary, and 460 from elementary programs.

For the most part, the basic concepts of parental involvement are being taught to students. Administrator and teacher trainees are most consistently taught subject matter in the area of *parental issues and concerns* (more than 94% of all programs teach these concepts). Concepts involving *race and culture*, as well as potential levels of *parent inclusion* also enjoy high levels of integration into the curriculum of all programs (76% or more of all programs).

Much more variation, however, is found when the subjects of *adult personal interaction/group dynamics, strategies for involving parents, and participatory school-site governance* are taught to students as important parent involvement concepts (57% to 92% of the programs). This wide range should be of concern, as this indicates that in some instances nearly one-half of administrator or teacher trainees are failing to receive even conceptual training in some of these very important areas.

Of all of the concepts being taught, the development of home learning materials is by far the least frequent, and shows significant variation (28% to 46%). Given the strong research and literature base support for the importance of the home learning environment, this finding should be particularly alarming to educators.

While the concept training of administrators and teachers was by-and-large well integrated into the curriculum of the programs, the skill training enjoyed significantly less success. In fact, the only skill consistently and reasonably well integrated into the curriculum was *how to conduct parent conferences* (67% to 69%).

Two parent involvement skills were significantly under-represented in the curriculum taught to the educators in training, *how to hold workshops for parents* (14% to 31%) and *how to parents can observe classroom instruction* (14% to 24%). Three other skills were included only moderately in the curriculum, and were also shown to be significantly lower than would have been expected statistically, *how to use parents as aides* (36% to 49%), *how to structure and hold large events which include parents* (22% to 40%) and *how to help parents learn about and use community resources* (47% to 66%).

One surprising patterns emerged from the research: In skills preparation, students involved in secondary education programs received training less frequently than those in elementary and administration in every category. Why this is true is not certain, but it is clear

Parent Involvement Concepts Taught by Training Program Type

| Concept | % Teaching | % NOT Teaching |
|---|---|---|
| Participatory School-Site Governance * | | |
| Elementary | 57.1 | 42.9 |
| Secondary | 71.9 | 28.1 |
| Administration | 91.8 | 8.2 |
| Adult Personal Interaction/Group Dynamics * | | |
| Elementary | 66.1 | 33.9 |
| Secondary | 73.7 | 26.3 |
| Administration | 88.9 | 11.1 |
| Parents' Issues and Concerns | | |
| Elementary | 96.0 | 4.0 |
| Secondary | 94.1 | 5.9 |
| Administration | 96.8 | 3.2 |
| Other Races and Cultures | | |
| Elementary | 83.2 | 16.8 |
| Secondary | 88.6 | 11.4 |
| Administration | 82.5 | 17.5 |
| Levels of Possible Parent Involvement * | | |
| Elementary | 80.3 | 19.7 |
| Secondary | 76.9 | 23.1 |
| Administration | 91.9 | 8.1 |
| Specific Strategies for Parent Involvement * | | |
| Elementary | 81.6 | 18.4 |
| Secondary | 72.6 | 27.4 |
| Administration | 67.8 | 32.3 |
| Developing Home Learning Materials * | | |
| Elementary | 46.3 | 53.7 |
| Secondary | 39.5 | 60.5 |
| Administration | 27.9 | 72.1 |

* Demonstrates statistical significance at $p < .05$ using the Pearson Chi Square analysis

that there is no rationale in the research or professional literature which would explain or justify such a trend.

The overriding conclusion of this study indicates that all program types — elementary, secondary, and administration — still have much to do to enhance their training curriculum to include concepts and skills dealing with parent involvement. Many institutions still do not teach any of these concepts and skills. The area of parent involvement is not organized at most universities as a shared curriculum area with coordinated research efforts.

Until teacher and administrator preparation programs at universities make parent involvement an accepted and standard part of their curriculum, educators will continue to perceive themselves as inadequately prepared. And, in

Skills Taught for Involving Parents by Training Program Type

| Skill | % Teaching | % NOT Teaching |
|---|---|---|
| Parent-School Conferences | | |
| Elementary | 67.2 | 32.8 |
| Secondary | 66.4 | 33.6 |
| Administration | 69.1 | 30.9 |
| Written Communication | | |
| Elementary | 58.1 | 41.9 |
| Secondary | 53.1 | 46.9 |
| Administration | 64.2 | 35.8 |
| Parent/Community Aides * | | |
| Elementary | 48.6 | 51.4 |
| Secondary | 36.3 | 63.8 |
| Administration | 47.0 | 53.0 |
| Parent Observation * | | |
| Elementary | 23.5 | 76.5 |
| Secondary | 13.8 | 86.2 |
| Administration | 23.0 | 77.0 |
| Large Events * | | |
| Elementary | 26.9 | 73.1 |
| Secondary | 21.9 | 78.1 |
| Administration | 40.0 | 60.0 |
| Workshops for Parents * | | |
| Elementary | 19.5 | 80.5 |
| Secondary | 14.2 | 85.8 |
| Administration | 30.6 | 69.4 |
| Community Resources * | | |
| Elementary | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| Secondary | 47.2 | 52.8 |
| Administration | 66.2 | 33.8 |

* Demonstrates statistical significance at $p < .05$ using the Pearson Chi Square analysis

actuality they will not be prepared to work effectively with parents. For the present, parent involvement will continue to be a popular topic of discussion rather than a common and accepted practice in the nation's schools.

James R. Young is an associate professor of Educational Psychology, and Steven J. Hite is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership, at Brigham Young University (328 MCKB, P. O. Box 25093, Provo, UT 84602-5093). A copy of a detailed version of their study is available; send a request with a self-addressed, stamped 9"x12" envelope.

## Influences on Higher Achievement of Latino At-Risk Students Are Identified

By Augustina H. Reyes

In 1991, the author conducted a study of "at-risk" Latino students in a large urban high school in Texas, to determine what factors in the students' home and school lives had a positive effect on their scholastic achievement. Results indicated that seven factors, when combined with compatible school resources, had a positive effect on the achievement levels of students in at-risk learning environments:

- Parents having a moderate level of formal education, in Spanish or English.
- Strong parental supervision.
- Positive contact with the school.
- High parental expectations.
- Attendance at pre-kindergarten.
- Many books in the home.
- Participation in extracurricular activities in the school and community and the school.

This study compared the influences of parents, peers, community, and school resources on achievement for a sample of at-risk students and regular education students in an urban Latino high school campus. A sample of 10 at-risk and 10 regular education students was drawn from a large, urban high school in 1991.

### Parent's Educational Background

The mothers' educational levels appeared to have a positive influence on student achievement. However, this is not in the traditional context as compared to majority parents. For the Latino parents in the sample, eight to 12 years of U.S. schooling or five or more years of Mexican schooling had a positive influence on student achievement. Children whose parents fell in this category had the highest achievement scores. Even low achieving students whose parents came from this category performed at passing or near passing levels on the achievement test. These extraordinarily low rates of parental level of formal education—by U. S. standards—appeared to have positive effects on the sample of students. Students who were without supervision while mothers worked at night and students whose mothers had three years or less of U.S. or Mexican schooling were also the students with the lowest test scores or who were dropping out of school.

Parents' education level had a second dimension of influence in the case of Spanish-speaking parents. Literacy, or the ability to read and write Spanish, had a positive influence on student achievement. Of the entire sample of at-risk and regular students, only 10% received a daily English newspaper yet 75% regularly read Spanish language newspapers. The parent's Spanish

literacy did not have a negative effect on achievement. The highest achieving students in this sample had parents who spoke only Spanish. All the parents in the sample strongly agreed that their children had to have command of the English language to be academically and economically successful in the U.S. At the same time, 75% of the parents thought it was important that students be rooted in their cultural heritage and maintain their fluency in Spanish. Parents saw Spanish fluency as important to the student's cultural heritage, but also placed an economic value to it by indicating that knowledge of Spanish increased the student's future employability and income.

## Home Atmosphere

Strong parental supervision and parental qualities also positively affected achievement. During the interviews that the author conducted, it became evident that those students with the highest achievement scores also had parents who maintained neat, not necessarily elegant, but orderly and structured home environments. Parents who positively influenced their children's achievement consistent disciplinarians who had many rules for students to follow at home, reinforced proper manners and behavior, and showed concern for poor behavior and poor school performance. Strong parents also had quality time and energy to supervise students including enforcing homework times and restricting television. Strong parental supervision also included parental appreciation of academic success.

## Home-School Contacts

Quality school contact also made a difference in the achievement level of students in this sample. For example, when parents had generally contacted the school in response to student problems, such as skipping or breaking school rules, there was a negative effect. By contrast, when parents contacted teachers to communicate with them or when they attended open house, children tended to have higher achievement levels. Spanish-speaking parents reported less involvement in school organizations because meetings were held only in English.

## Expectations of Parents

High parental expectations positively affected student achievement. In response to a question on parental career expectations, all the parents with children in regular education programs expected the student to go to college and become professionals. They expressed confidence in the students' intelligence, motivation, determination, and capabilities. The parents of at-risk students expected students to graduate from high school and get a blue or pink collar job. Though their expectations were lower, they still wanted their children to achieve more than they had achieved.

## Preschool Programs

Participation in a preschool program, in most cases, had a positive effect on achievement. Of the regular sample of students, 60% attended preschool programs. Of the at-risk sample, 50% attended preschool programs. These mixed reviews suggest a need for quality preschool data in future studies.

## Home Reading Materials

Books in the home were another factor that tended to have a positive effect on achievement. Judgment on this variable was made through observation during the home interview with parents. Some parents had attested to having hundreds of books in the home when none were visible. No judgment was made on the type of books available in the home, but a dictionary was found to be the

most important book affecting achievement levels. Many at-risk families did not have a dictionary. Encyclopedias also made a difference, but magazines and newspapers did not appear to have a positive effect.

## Extracurricular Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities in the community and the school were another significant factor. Of the regular sample and the highest-achieving students, 90% reported involvement in school-sponsored extracurricular activities. Of the at-risk sample, 90% reported no involvement in school-sponsored extracurricular activities. School resources were calculated on a per-pupil basis on direct and indirect instructional costs. School budget data showed that more money was spent on direct instruction for regular education students than for direct instruction for at-risk students, resulting in a higher achievement for regular education students. Spending less money for direct instruction for at-risk students is contrary to state policy which provides extra funding for this population.

## Summary

This exploratory study produced micro-level results that are specific to one high school campus with high concentrations of Latino and at-risk students; clearly the study has limitations. The first limitation is its size, which included only one campus for finance data and 20 students for community survey data. This small sample size also precludes any analysis by gender. The second limitation is that findings are not generalizable. The sample was derived from a highly at-risk minority population. Achievement was measured using state minimum competency test scores as an achievement mark, which presents concerns; however, the minimum competency was the only test uniformly given to all students enrolled in the study campus. The significance of this study is that it provides a research methodology for investigating school and community resource data, and traces these data to individual students and programs, while probing issues of quality. This process provides a system for making day-to-day administrative data-driven decisions. The study suggests several areas to probe in a larger-scale study. Finally, most researchers do not include sufficient numbers of Latino students or do not gather data on a bilingual basis. Given growth projections of this population, future studies can benefit from these research findings.

**Reference**

"At-Risk" is defined in Texas as a student who is handicapped, has limited English-speaking proficiency, has not performed satisfactorily on certain academic tests or achieved well in certain academic tests or achieved well in certain skill areas, is overage, has been held back for one academic year, and/or has been absent frequently. Students so defined usually exhibit several of these characteristics. School districts with such so defined students receive additional state funding.

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# Book Reviews

**by Arthur W. Steller**

Books for review and requests to serve as a guest book reviewer may be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Deputy Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, 30 Carruth St., Boston, MA 02124.

**Promoting Your School: Going Beyond PR.**
**By Carolyn Warner. SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA 1994.**

Principals are increasingly under pressure to convince the public that what is happening inside their school houses is worthy of being labeled excellent. Creating and maintaining a quality educational program is a difficult assignment in these troubled times. And communicating it is even more of a problem in a society bombarded with messages.

Help is available with this book by Carolyn Warner, former state superintendent for Arizona. In her research, she surveyed several hundred state principals-of-the-year from all across the United States. What she received back were hundreds of tested ideas to enhance communications internally and externally. Practicing principals will relish the concrete suggestions and examples which other principals have already proven in their school situations.

Every chapter is full of sample letters, survey forms, notices and other public relations documents. The author ties it all together by splicing comments from communications experts onto the outline of what principals face every day. Some of the especially appealing chapters are: "How to Make Your School Stand Out in a Crowd," "Building Your Team," and "Involving Parents in School." The content also addresses assessments, internal communications, publications, media relations, and crisis management.

The only criticism of this work is that the author mislabeled the subtitle as "Going Beyond PR". What she describes is PR and not beyond PR.

**Teacher Union Bargaining: Practice and Policy.**
**By Gene Geisert and Myron Lieberman. Precept Press, 160 E. Illinois St., Chicago, IL 60611. 1994, 293 pp.**

Collective bargaining between employees and school boards is practiced by most school districts in the United States. Unfortunately, few individuals except those sitting at the negotiating table really understand the process. Consequently, misperceptions abound both among school people and the public at large, challenging school communications officials with a difficult task. But help is at hand in this book.

Thousands of hours negotiating contracts between school boards and unions have prepared the authors to pass on their accumulated knowledge to others.

The first line of the book's preface is a wake-up call — "Collective bargaining is by nature adversarial." Everything flows from that simple basic truth. In the author's words: "When boards understand this fact and adequately prepare themselves, they will be better able to deal with the realities of bargaining and the threats to their integrity." The same goes for those on the opposite side of the table.

The authors have found that collective bargaining often runs counter to conventional wisdom about educational reform. For example:

> School boards and school administrators need to be fair, but at the same time they must protect themselves and the district against those who would take advantage of their fairness. Sharing decisions with teachers' unions will not provide that protection. Reforms that propose to "empower unionized teachers" or "replace hierarchical structures with peer group control," and accord "professional autonomy" to teachers are ludicrous intellectually and devastating in their political and policy consequences. Such proposals are tantamount to prescribing the germs to cure the disease. The only question is how long the patient can survive these misguided prescriptions.

From the authors' point of view, such

reform measures could be attempted, but outside of contractual documents and obligations.

Within this valuable guide, you will learn why collective bargaining is necessary and understand legislative impacts, preparation and formation of teams, common mistakes, general strategy, and tactics. School communication officials employed in districts with collective bargaining are advised to read this volume as a basic primer on the topic.

**Maximizing Employee Productivity.**
**By Robert Sibson. AMACOM Books, 135 W. 50th St., 15th Flr., New York, NY 10020. 1994, 198 pp.**

Educators are constantly called upon to improve productivity. Generally, this cry is answered with reforms and innovations which may or may not enhance productivity. New organizational structures or decentralized decision making procedures are established, or the response calls upon technology. Yet, productivity usually inches forward slowly, if at all.

Part of the reason for lack of significant progress is that the focus is off target. Education is a labor intensive field. People make up 80-90% of every school budget.

Therefore, employees must be more productive if a school system is to be more productive.

Robert Sibson is an old business pro when it comes to human resource development. His book is a common sense approach that is not contingent upon organizational chaos, disruption, or even re-engineering, the current organizational buzzword.

The book's 12 steps, while conceived for business, are applicable to school districts. These are:

- getting executive commitment
- developing a productivity culture
- making productivity part of every manager's job
- measuring productivity
- using technology more effectively
- eliminating unproductive practices
- empowering employees
- utilizing networking
- ensuring excellence in staffing
- restructuring through streamlining and possible staff reduction
- managing performance and
- rewarding performance.

**Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal.**
**By Andrew Hacher. Charles Scribner's Son, McMillan Publisher Co., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY. 1992, 257 pp.**

Public relations involves the entire spectrum of the public, and knowledge of our society is a prerequisite for effective communications.

The question that this book poses is: are we "one nation under God"? The author's answer is that the divisions of color and class in America are proof that many shared freedoms are illusionary. One chapter, "Parents and Children, Do the Races Really Differ?" reminds the reader that "...the statistics are dismaying. Nearly two thirds of black babies are now born outside of wedlock, and over half of black families are headed by women. Other numbers are just as discouraging. The author goes behind the data to compare similarities and differences beyond just racial categories.

Educators will be drawn to the three chapters titled "Education," "Segregated Schooling", and "What's Best for Black Children?" Unfortunately, while the matters discussed are real, conclusions are thin.

Racial topics are extremely sensitive in this country and influence the thinking of all Americans. Andrew Hacher turns up the lights on the problems of a society that hasn't been able to safeguard everyone's civil liberties. Perhaps, this is all we can expect — highlighting the right question. the closing paragraph is aptly positioned.

> A huge racial chasm remains, and there are few signs that the coming century will see it closed. A century and a quarter after slavery, white America continues to ask of its black citizens an extra patience and perseverance that white Americans have never required of themselves. So the question for white Americans is essentially moral: is it right to impose on members of an entire race a lesser start in life, and then to expect

from them a degree of resolution that has never been demanded from your own race?

The promise of an educated population is that these and other complex questions will be resolved and, thus, dismissed from the public agenda. Until then, educators will struggle, along with everyone else, and it will be up to effective communicators to encourage productive dialogue. *Two Nations* is one segment of an extended conversation.

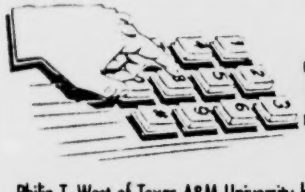
**Successful Publishing in Scholarly Journals.**
**By Bruce Thyer. SAGE Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA. 1994.**

This book gives invaluable practical tips for career success for readers in academic pursuits or those who are contemplating a future in higher education. It is one of a series entitled "Survival Skills for Scholars." College professors are not taught these aspects of working in academia which are presented here in a most readable fashion.

The suggestions offered are applicable to anyone interested in being published or in a position designed to help others have their work published.

The chapters center on topics such as "Selecting an Appropriate Journal," "Preparing and Submitting the Manuscript," and "Developing a Personal Program of Productive Publishing." Public relations people will find chapter six, "Marketing Your Published Article," to be helpful in gaining extra mileage out of published articles.

To comply with the advice in this booklet definitely requires discipline, but writers conditioned to meeting deadlines or exacting standards will respond well to these frameworks.



# PR FAX

Philip T. West of Texas A&M University began a research report in this Journal in 1980. The PR FAX newsletter, published by the Center for Public Relations of the University Council for Educational Administration, was devoted to abstracts of research articles in its issues of 1993 and early 1994.

Previous Journals are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Inc., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor MI 48106. Photocopies of selected pages (by volume and number) are $1 each plus a stamped, self-addressed 9"x12" envelope (checks only, no purchase orders). Order photocopies from the Journal of Educational Public Relations, PO Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17011.

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, UCEA PROGRAM CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

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## PR Research Article Bibliography

The annotations for the following PR research articles were prepared by Kelly Bostrom, Chris Calvin, Jim Davis, Gary D. Giebel, Aura L. Gromala, Alicia R. Ingram, Laurie Rath, David R. Sahm, Greg Steel, and Mike Tomchesson. The articles originated in the Research Section of the *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, formerly titled the *Journal of Educational Communication*. They include the years 1983 to 1988.

The annotations should prove especially useful to professors compiling an educational PR bibliography for their classes and to students gathering research on a particular topic in educational PR for a written or oral presentation. The annotations should also prove useful to PR practitioners interested in educational PR research.

Pierce, J. C. (1983). Home reading programs help improve school-community relations. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(3), 36-37.

A survey of parents of 1st and 2nd graders in Monongalia County, West Virginia, suggested that reading programs can help improve school-community relations. As a result of this program, parents held a more positive view of their school, of their children's teachers and principal, and also continued their children's education at home.

Kazemzadeh, L. D. (1983). Role of PR director different if on administrative team. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(3), 37-38.

Public school superintendents with PR directors on their administrative team perceived the director's job as being different compared to those PR directors not on an administration team. Eighty-six percent of the teams studied had a PR director who was expected to take part in every topic of the team's work and give input on community concerns. Advising the superintendent and instructing school and community personnel about public relations were additional responsibilities.

Barber, T., (1983). Board presidents and superintendents assess importance of PR of policy descriptors. *Journal of Educational Communication*, 6(4), 36-38.

A national study found that school board presidents and superintendents generally agreed on a list of 41 descriptors that could be used for PR policy development. While disagreement between the two groups did emerge on 13 descriptors, the ratings given to these descriptors identified them as at least moderately important. Overall superintendent ratings were higher than those of board presidents. These descriptors were also analyzed in terms of respondent experience, educational attainment, and size of school district.

West, P. T., (1983). School district size has little effect on policy opinions of PR directors. *Journal of Educational Communication*. 6(4) 36.

In a national study designed to elicit the opinions of school PR directors on how school PR policy ought to be carried out, school district enrollment size apparently has little effect on how PR policy is or should be developed. When six categories of school district enrollment size were studied only four statements out of 93 showed any disagreement on PR policy.

Ishaq, Y. (1984). PR Plays a minor role in desegregation efforts. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(1), 30

Most surveyed school districts did not use public relations as a strategy in the desegregation process of their schools. This information was obtained from a sample of 377 school districts taken from five national regions. Each district had at least a 5% black student enrollment. The study also revealed useful strategies to facilitate school desegregation.

Oberg, T. (1984). NSPRA Accredited PR directors opt for organization. *Journal of Educational Public Relations* 7(1), 30.

According to a survey, school PR directors who have National School Public Relations Association accreditation seem concerned with public relations activities that deal with program management. For NSPRA accredited directors, PR inservice for the school staff was a top priority. On the other hand, non-accredited directors placed much less importance on staff training

**Whetten, C.L.**, (1984). Personal contact most favored as PR technique for community educators. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(1), 31.

A Texas study of community educators revealed personal communication and involvement as the most effective strategy for working with the public. The directors listed three public relations tools that were the most effective in implementing a community education program. The sample consisted of 36 first-year community education directors, who were attending a Texas A & M University workshop.

**Bratlien, M. and West, P. T.**, (1984). Educational marketing draws support at Southeast Texas educator conference. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*. 7(2), 28.

The majority of respondents in a recent survey of Texas educators and board members stressed an interest in educational marketing. Highest on their agreement list was the need to have an information program in school districts that did not employ the services of either a full- or part-time educational public relations specialist.

**Flowers, H. F., & Kolen, M. J.**, (1984). Who are the voters who feel they should vote yes in school budget referenda? *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(2), 29.

The liklihood of passing school financial referenda is increased with a high turn-out of women and highly educated voters. School district employees and their families were also listed as important voters for success. Most voters tend to believe that supporting school referenda is the socially accepted thing to do. The survey revealed these people are likely to report that they almost always vote in favor of school budget referenda.

**West, P. T., & Bratlien, M.**, (1984). But educational marketing gets top billing at Iowa administrator institute. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(2), 28.

A sample of Iowa educators were respondents to 10 statements presented to southeast Texas conferees. The follow-up Iowa survey revealed a greater emphasis on educational marketing than did the Texas survey. Both groups agree that citizen interaction and involvement are keys to community relations.

**Golen, S.**, (1984). Administrators identify communication problems when dealing with their supervisors. *Journal Of Educational Public Relations*, 7(3), 34.

Communication problems exist between higher echelon managers and their superiors. Managers indicated that there was difficulty in communicating with their bosses. Causes of this problem were identified, and a solution was offered by establishing workshops for both superiors and the managers.

**West, P. T., & Bratlien, M.**, (1984). Educational public relations directors have little effect on the perception of school business officials. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(3), 34-35.

School business managers see the PR director to be heavily into the marketing of school programs and promoting citizen involvement in schools, according to a survey of Texas school business officials.

**Gardner, D. W., & Shakeshaft, C.**, (1984). A telephone survey is timely, cheap and accurate. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(4), 11-12.

Telephone surveys return a 90% response rate with relatively inexpensive costs and accurate data. Though not ideal for lengthy and more in-depth surveys, the telephone allows the surveyor to get immediate results. Additionally, the people being sampled have a greater interest in giving answers on the phone than through the mail.

**West, P. T.**, (1984). Professors favor community involvement as a PR strategy. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 7(4), 10-11.

Citizen involvement and interaction are keys to community understanding and support, according to a national group of educational administration professors. These same professors strongly favored an information program for every school district.

**Achilles, C. M., Lintz, M., & Wayson, W. W.**, (1985). Who does the public credit for building confidence in school? *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(1), 30-31.

The public views teachers and administrators as most responsible for building confidence in school systems. Highly visible, the superintendent is believed to be most responsible at the district level. Building confidence at the individual school level falls to those who work in the building, the teachers and principals. This is confirmed by a 1982 study which investigated what schools and school districts do to build confidence and who does that confidence building. Educators must be ambassadors and sell their schools to the public through positive confidence building efforts.

**Gorton, R. A., & Newsome, M.**, (1985). School-Press relations are better than expected—but some improvement is still needed. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8 (1), 31.

Mutual relations between principals and reporters are rated very good by both groups. Principals know more and are more favorable of the press than first believed. Moreover, principals are more knowledgeable and less suspicious of the press than the literature would seem to suggest.

**Lintz, M. N., Achilles, C. M., & Wayson, W. W.**, (1985). The attitudes of teachers and administrators are a key influence in the public's confidence in education. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(2), 34-35.

In the eyes of the public, educators play a major role in either the gain or loss of confidence in schools, according to a study done by the commission on public education. The attitudes of both teachers and administrators, along with students and parents, rank high as factors in gain or loss in

confidence of a school district.

**West, P.T., West, J. E.., & Bratlein, M. J..** (1985). Survey signals a markeung role for Texas teachers. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(2), 33-34.

A regional Texas school board conference favored efforts by school districts to recognize talented teachers through both media outlets and public ceremonies. Teachers should market themselves, what they teach, and students accomplishments in the community. Some apparent contradictions did surface, however, including that teachers need not view their students as clients, nor be required to receive merit pay on the basis of a student's academic progress.

**Gorton, D.,** (1985). Most middle school principals recognize a need to connect with those adults who do not have children in school. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(3), 29.

A research study of middle school principals showed that they understand the need for involvement of non-traditional interest groups in their community. The study also covers the statistical numbers already involved in this inclusion process. The response to the instrument was high and was taken from a random sample.

**Lamb, R. D., & West, P.T.,** (1985). Community education ranks high as a method of judging PR effecuveness in a school district. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(3), 28-29.

This is a study of attitudes among school board presidents and superintendents of public schools with community education programs. The study gives results on 25 public relations outcomes and indicates attitudes among professionals that differ in level of education attained. The study is an updated version of an earlier study following the same criteria, which ranks community education programs as an indicator of public relations effecuveness in school districts.

**Nasstrom, R. R., Walden, E., Whitsell, C. & Waller, S.,** (1986). Community pressure, school size, and the resignation of coaches. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(4), 12-13.

A Wisconsin study of small, medium, and large school districts indicate that small communities place more pressure on coaches to win, thus leading to more resignations and problems with reassignment and rescheduling. For this reason, small communities must recognize the external pressures on small town coaches to win and stress this to any new coaches who are hired.

**Vaupel, C.F., & Brown, K.,** (1986). Elementary principals in the Mid-South are increasing their PR programs. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 8(4), 12.

In a study done in the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, it was discovered that there is heightened use of public relations principles in the schools. The annual open house proved to be the most widely used PR technique among the seven that were listed as most important.

**Lamb, R. D., & West, P.T.,** (1986). Selected PR evaluation criteria viewed similarly by superintendents and board presidents. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 9(1), 14-16.

Superintendents and school board presidents were mostly in agreement as to what is important to evaluate in a PR program. Indeed, only five out of 25 PR evaluation strategies were not deemed useful by the two groups. Agreement was highest on whether people moved into a district because of its schools. The success of school financial elections was a top ranking agreement item.

**West, P. T.** (1986). Teacher and student strengths should be publicized. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 9(2), 22.

A poll at a Louisiana educational public relations conference supported the use of media to display the strengths of teachers. Educators also favor greater advertising of student achievement throughout the community. Individuals polled included public school administrators and public school teachers.

**West, P. T.,** (1986). Texas PR directors in both public and private sectors have similar responsibilities. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 9(3), 16-19.

A survey of Texas education PR directors and business/industry PR directors revealed that both parties could benefit from comprehensive training efforts in PR. The survey also revealed that PR directors in public and private sectors differ more among themselves than they do between each other in terms of job responsibilities.

**Conway, H.E. and West, P. T.** (1987). PR grows in importance in British higher educational institutions. *Jour-*


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*nal of Educational Public Relations* , 9(4), 36-37.

British universities, polytechnics, and central institutions are increasing their PR efforts as they move into the 21st Century. According to a recent Delphi study, chief administrative officers see a greater involvement of community, business, and industry in higher education institutions, which will create an increased need for PR. Identified were several trends that demonstrated this need.

**West, P. T.** (1987). Texas PR directors in education and business/industry reveal an interest in learning together. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 9(4), 37.

Texas industry, business, and educational PR directors responded favorably in a telephone survey concerning cooperative PR training. Ten each of business/industry and educational PR directors were questioned in six areas ranging from interest in cooperative training to identifying PR skills in need of attention.

**Frazier, L.** (1987). Superintendent-initiated contact improves school press relationships. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 10(1), 25.

According to a recent study of Tennessee school superintendents and newspaper reporters, better relationships among respondents were established when there was a greater number of superintendent-initiated contacts as opposed to reporter-initiated contacts. Of the seven listed recommendations, the two main ones were written policy developed by the superintendent and school board to deal with the media and weekly superintendent contact with the education reporter.

**West, P. T.** (1987). Salary tops age and gender factors when related to PR tasks. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 10(2), 34-35.

A study was conducted using PR directors from both education and business/industry. The study focused on the relationship between PR tasks and salary, age, and sex variables. These variables were compared to the actual and ideal roles and responsibilities of the PR directors in both groups. The result was that salary variable exceeded the other two variables in importance when associated with PR tasks being performed or supervised.

**Gorton, D.** (1987). Most principals don't see parents as informal evaluators. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 10(3), 38.

A study was conducted using principals at the elementary and middle school levels. The data indicates that principals do not find parents helpful or dependable sources of evaluative opinion on administrative performance.

**Shelton, M.** (1987). Principal-teacher communication is paramount to effective staff morale. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 10(3), 38-39.

A doctoral study was conducted which involved principals and teachers from elementary and secondary schools. The study produced convincing data that revealed the important relationship between principal-teacher communication and the effect on teacher morale.

**Warner, G.** (1987). Public relations officers and presidents of higher education agree on the importance of certain external publics. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 10(3), 39.

A recent study conducted with public relations officers and presidents of public schools and universities in the southwest concluded the importance of 21 external publics to their programs. The top six external publics were donors, state legislators, prospective students, alumni, prospective donors, and governing bodies.

**Ching, D.L., and West, P. T.,** (1988). Information is central role of foreign student services administrator. *Journal of Educational Public Relations* , 10(4), 14.

Developing interpersonal relationships through gathering information and communicating it well is central to the performance of administrators of foreign students. In an assessment of the roles and responsibilities of administrators of foreign students services, the survey identified a gap between the tasks that should be performed by them in an ideal job situation and the tasks that they actually performed.

**Eaton, E. R. and West, P. T.,** (1988). Assistant high school principals will have an important PR role. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 11(1), 31.

A recent Delphi study indicated that the role of secondary school assistant principals is changing from one primarily dealing with school discipline to one more associated with public relations. The study of current and future roles revealed that the assistant principal must be willing to accept responsibility for improving relationships with teachers, for enhancing communication with parents and students, and for improving teacher attitudes. More on-the-job training in PR should be required of current assistant principals to prepare them for this new role. Also, more PR related course work should be included in preparatory programs for these administrators.

**Witters-Churchill, L.** (1988). Principals view internship as important way to improve communication skills. *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 11(3), 32.

An internship is the way oral communication skills should be developed in students training to be administrators. Other ways are games, simulations, and group process training. These approaches are in direct contrast to lecture and discussion, used most in preparation programs, but rated lowest by responding principals. To develop written communication, individual and team research is considered to be the ideal model. Two other methods are computer-assisted instruction and instructional models.

# Guidelines

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### Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

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# The Journal of Educational RELATIONS

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Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships ✐ Vol. 16 No. 4



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# Notes From the Editor

## Evidence that Greater Involvement of the Community Would Be Welcomed by Educators.

The information in the University of Maine researchers' report in this issue is remarkable. Advocates of expanded school-community relations have urged educators to reach out and communicate/relate with parents and the citizenry. Now we have evidence that administrators and teachers actually desire more such relationships, presuming we can generalize from the Maine study for Middle America.

The authors refer to reasons why the desire alone for involvement will not necessarily or easily lead to same. Principals have been trained to be managers in a hierachial system where decisions are made at the top. This operational procedure is in conflict with shared decision-making processes. But this data can provide a stimulus to administrators, as well as educators in leadership roles, to initiate team building, which is a prerequisite to effective shared decision-making.

### A Voice from the Past

When we began this Journal in 1975, Jack Kennedy, then president of the Education Writers Association, wrote a letter of support. I had worked with Jack while I served on the EWA board as the associate member representative.

Jack recently retired as education writer for the Lincoln Journal, Nebraska, and wanted to express his views about criticisms of public education. He believes that educators, not "the media," have been the main creators of the "darkness" surrounding public education and provides some observations that will warm the hearts of outspoken supporters of aggressive school PR and school-community programs.

### Help Us Spread the Word

We believe our efforts to make every issue of the Journal better than the previous ones are evidenced especially in this issue whose content is original (except for one worthy reprint from the AASA magazine) and probably as useful and worthwhile as you'll find in any journal/magazine. Submissions of helpful and timely articles from the higher educational community are up to an encouraging degree.

We'd like to send sample copies of the Journal to people you believe would value and benefit from such content. Take a moment, if you would, to send us names and addresses of people, in schools or higher education, who should be regular readers.

Albert E. Holliday

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by David W. Brown, Constance M. Perry and Walter G. McIntire

# Parents, Students, Community Members—
## Teachers and Administrators Desire Their Increased Participation in Making Educational Decisions

This paper describes how teachers and principals in 15 schools in an organized school improvement initiative perceive the current and ideal involvement of students, parents andcommunity members in making educational decisions. In general, teachers and administrators desire greater involvement of students, parents and community members than is currently the case in their schools. However, teachers and administrators do not agree about the desired level of involvement by decision area.

Do principals and teachers really desire involvement of others in school decisions? The research reported here was designed to, first; assess teachers' and principals' perception of current involvement of parents, community members and students in selected areas of school decision-making and, second; determine their desired level of involvement of these groups.

The research on school change has grown at a near geometric rate since the mid-1970s. An important part of that research has focused on the roles and responsibilities of school principals. In studying the specific role of the principal in change, those principals judged to be effective were found to share power and responsibility with others[1] and to work collaboratively with others.[2] Sharing power and responsibility describes shared decision-making which has become a major focus of many school improvement endeavors.[3, 4, 5, 6, 7] Most of the recent improvement literature supports shared decision-making by having principals involve teachers. However, in many cases, involvement of students, parents and other community members is advocated. Some of the purported benefits are: facilitates making better decisions; encourages teachers to assume greater responsibility for what happens in the school[8]; increases teacher job satisfaction[9]; minimizes sabotage of selected decisions[10]; increases efficacy of those involved[11] ; and contributes to improved student achievement.[12]

### METHODS

The subjects of this research were 160 teachers and nine principals from 15 schools involved in school restructuring efforts. They were from rural Maine, lower to middle class, predominately white communities. Each system responded to a University-based program offering interventions designed to increase academic and vocational aspirations of students.

The systems varied in size and structure. One was of eight communities with 816 students K-12 in four schools. A second had six communities with 1014 students K-12 with 6 schools. The third consisted of three communities with 955 students K-12 in 5 schools and the smallest served two communities with 322 students K-8 in one school. Their 9-12 students were tuitioned toanother district.

Each district conducted a self assessment of community, staff, and student perceptions of a wide range of educational issues and accepted the basic premise that significant reform can occur only when everyone is involved _ students, staff, community members, parents, administrators and policy makers (school boards). The assumption was made that each of

that these constituencies had vested interests in school reform. The teacher and administrator survey included adecision-making survey.

This survey was designed to assess decision making in four basic areas: (1) mission, goals and objectives as they relate to the district, buildings and classrooms; (2) curriculum, from specific learning outcomes to the development of curriculum documents; (3) communication and how it relates to procedures to adequately involve staff, students and community in school issues; and (4) students, which includes methods of assessing student progress and program of study requirements. The choices of involvement ranged along a 5-point continuum from "primarily responsible for the decision" to "not involved or informed during the decision-making process." The four topic areas were selected as ones in which parents, community members and students have vested interests. For these types of decisions, we know that teachers desire greater involvement.[13]

## *RESULTS*

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Both teachers and principals report relatively little current involvement and prefer greater involvement of students, parents and community members in educational decision-making. The extent of agreement varies by issue and group. For all eight items of the four issue areas, teachers report desiring dramatically greater student involvement than they perceive currently exists. Principals perceive that presently students are involved to a greater degree than teachers perceive them to be and even though their discrepancy between the "current" and "ideal" is not as great as for teachers, principals still desire greater student involvement. The area where fewest principals and teachers desire student involvement is curriculum (Figures 1 & 2).

### PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

Both teachers and principals perceive little current involvement by parents and community members (see Figure 3). A majority of principals would like to see them involved in decision-making in the areas of Student Program of Study (67%), District Mission (56%), and Internal Communication (56%). Forty-four percent (44%) desire greater parent/community member involvement in the Student Progress,

**Figure 1.**
**Teachers' Perceptions of Student Involvement Decision-Making: Now and Ideal**

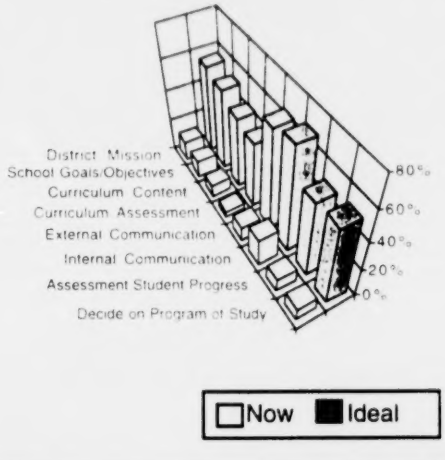
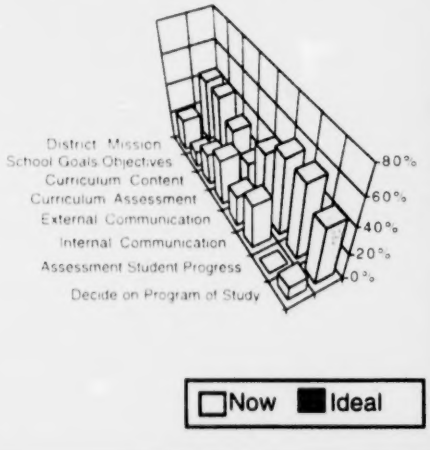
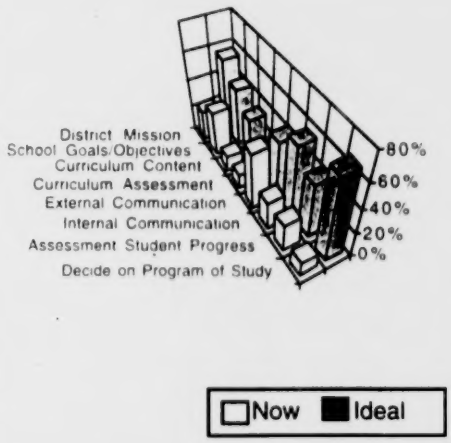



**Figure 2.**
**Principal's Perceptions of Student Involvement Decision-Making: Now and Ideal**



Building Goals, and External communication areas. A majority of teachers desire much more of their involvement in External and Internal Communications, District and Mission Goals, and Student Programs of Study. Note the lower levels of support by both teachers and principals for parent and community involvement in curriculum issues (Figures 3 & 4).

**Figure 3.**
**Teachers' Perceptions of Parent and Community Involvement Decision-Making: Now and Ideal**

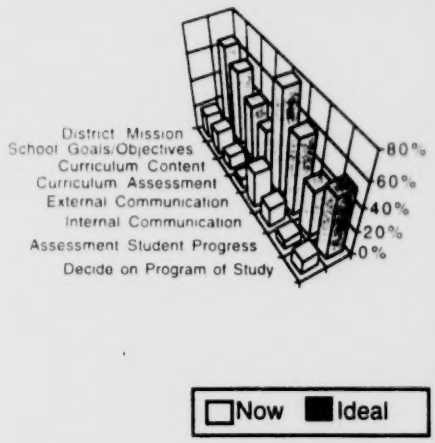



Significance of Study

If effective principals involve teachers and community members in restructuring efforts, if teachers desire involvement, and if parent, community and student involvement makes a positive contribution to the change process, why is it that few schools provide for more than token participation of these groups?[14]

The results of this research clearly suggest that teachers and principals in the rural schools surveyed here desire significantly more participation by students, parents and community members in educational decision-making than they see currently occurring. The results show that, even in schools involved in school improvement, gaps exist between what is, "the now," and what educators would like it to be — "the ideal," in terms of shared decision-making.

**Figure 4.**
**Principal's Perceptions of Parent and Community Involvement Decision-Making: Now and Ideal**




The issue is complex. There is considerable range on desirable degrees of involvement by group or type of decision. Principals and teachers perceive different current levels of involvement and desire, "in the ideal," different levels for these constituents. Educators must identify what, if any, gaps exists between their espoused beliefs and their actions. When gaps exist, as those found here, principals and teachers must first assess what it is they presently pay attention to. Do their actions support their beliefs concerning shared decision-making? If not, the first agenda must be to develop consensus between these two groups. Most principals have been trained to be managers and most teachers expect that of them. This leadership style is hierarchical, supporting the belief that decisions are made at the top. This is in conflict with shared decision-making. Principals behaviors must become more supportive of collaboration and teachers must encourage and accept this change. Educators must clearly define the role and responsibility of community members. For community members, parents and students to be involved, they must be party to the process of making decisions. They must become aligned with the school system. Their roles and responsibilities must be clear.

This study clearly demonstrates the desire of educators for broader community involvement in educational decision-making. However, having a desire does not automatically bring action. The question remains: if increased involvement of parents, students and community member is desired, what must be done to make it happen?

Conclusion

Administering the Shared Decision-Making Instrument, or a similar questionnaire, to school personnel and analyzing the results will enable all the relevant constituencies to examine perceptions of present and ideal involvement of students, parents and community members. This base line data can provide a starting point for discussion of shared decision-making and the implications for the process of its introduction to a school system. Policy makers must realize that team building (learning to work as a group, learning to communicate clearly and establishing mutual trust) is a prerequisite to effective shared decision-making. People cannot be thrown together and expected to automatically work as a group. Officials in school systems, in which there is the desire to strengthen the decision-making process, should take the time to build teams. They must provide some training, perhaps by using a facilitator who can help individuals learn to work together. This step will start the implementation of shared decision-making that many, including teachers and principals, desire.

Appendix A

**How To Increase Participation**

Based on our experiences, observations, and interviews, we have identified several steps we believe school leaders should take as they seek to increase participation of students, parents, and community members in decision-making. These steps are not necessarily sequential, but probably each should be addressed.

- Conduct a formal assessment of the perceived present involvement of each constituent group using a structured instrument such as one presented in Appendix B.
- Conduct the same assessment relative to each group's perception of its own and other groups' ideal role in decision-making.
- Create an environment in which open discussion of expectations, perceptions, and previous experiences of the participants are shared.
- Establish ground rules for the decision-making process which recognize the needs, personal concerns, different styles and capacities of all the participants in the process.
- Provide team building training and practice designed to strengthen communication and problem solving skills and to build mutual trust.
- Using all the available data, establish realistic attainable goals with time frames.
- Constantly do self-assessments of progress, make needed adjustments and continue.
- Depending on your skills in implementing such a process, the reader might consider using the services of a trained facilitator.

We believe that decisions made by teams including students, parents and community members are more apt to reflect the wide range of educational interests and issues found in our communities and be more responsive than those made by any one individual.

**Survey Instrument**

*Introduction*

In order to examine the decision-making process in Maine schools and districts, administrators, school-board members, and teachers are being asked to respond to the attached questionnaire. It is designed to assess how each group perceives the decision making that is taking place now, and how each group would ideally like to see decision making taking place in future situations. This is not meant to imply that anything is wrong with the way decisions are being made now.

The policies presented are ones that typically affect the everyday lives of students, staff, and the community. Decisions assessed in this questionnaire may be (a) written policy documents that exist or (b) practices which may be unwritten but are thought of as "the way things are done here."

While there are decisions which, by statute or policy are the ultimate responsibility of specific parties, this survey is designed to assess the level of involvement of various groups in the process of decisions being made in schools and districts.

## Internal School Climate

***Directions***

*Please respond to each item based on your perception of how decisions are made in your school system. Please refer to the following descriptions for clarification of the headings found on the survey:*

- The school board, school committee, or board of directors is an elected group of local citizens with the legal responsibility of establishing broad-based policies for the school district.
- The central office includes all central office administrators-superintendent, assistant superintendent, gifted and talented director, special education director, and other district administrators.
- The building administration includes all building-level administrators such as the principal, assistant principal(s), guidance directors, athletic director, etc.
- Staff refers to all teaching and non-teaching staff in the building or in the district, including district specialists and itinerant teachers.
- Students are all K-12 students in the district.
- Parents include citizens who currently have children attending any of the district schools.
- Community includes all residents within the boundaries of the school district, but also includes business people who work in the district other than parents.

Please respond to items based on your opinion of how you think things are currently and should be in your school/district. Use the following scale to describe degree of involvement on a continuum from "fully involved" to "not involved at all." For each item, simply circle the number that best describes degree of involvement.

| Not Involved At All In Decision | | Opinions Sought But Not Necessarily Involved | | Fully Involved In Decisions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | CURRENTLY | HOW THINGS SHOULD BE |
|---|---|---|
| I. MISSION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES | | |
| A. District education mission | | |
| 1. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B. Building education goals/objectives | | |
| 7. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| II. CURRICULUM | | |
| A. Select specific curriculum content. | | |
| 13. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B. Select and design assessment tools to evaluate the curriculum | | |
| 19. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

| Not Involved At All In Decision | | Opinions Sought But Not Necessarily Involved | | Fully Involved In Decisions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | CURRENTLY | HOW THINGS SHOULD BE |
|---|---|---|
| III. COMMUNICATIONS | | |
| A. Establish procedures to adequately involve the community in school issues | | |
| 25. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B. Establish procedures to adequately involve the staff and students in school issues | | |
| 31. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 34. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 35. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 36. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| IV. STUDENTS | | |
| A. Decide on methods of assessing students' educational progress | | |
| 37. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 38. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 39. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 40. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 41. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 42. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| B. Decide on programs of study and requirements for students | | |
| 43. School board | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 44. Central office | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 45. Principal/building administrator | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 46. Staff | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 47. Students | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 48. Parents and community | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Please respond to the following demographic questions.

49. Please indicate your involvement in this school district. Circle the category which best describes your primary involvement with this school district.

a. school board member
b. superintendent or other central office administrator
c. principal or other building-level administrator
d. teacher

50. Please indicate the category that comes closest to describing the grade level with which you work.

a. K-5
b. 6-8
c. 9-12
d. K-12
e. 6 or 7-12

51. If you are a staff member or a board member, how many years have you worked in this capacity in this system (including this year)?

a. 1
b. 2-4
c. 5-10
d. 11-20
e. 20+
f. does not apply

52. How many years, if any, have you lived in this district (including this year)?

a. 1-4
b. 5-10
c. 11-20
d. 20+
e. none

53. Are you a member of a leadership team/steering committee in this system?

54. Sex
a. male
b. female

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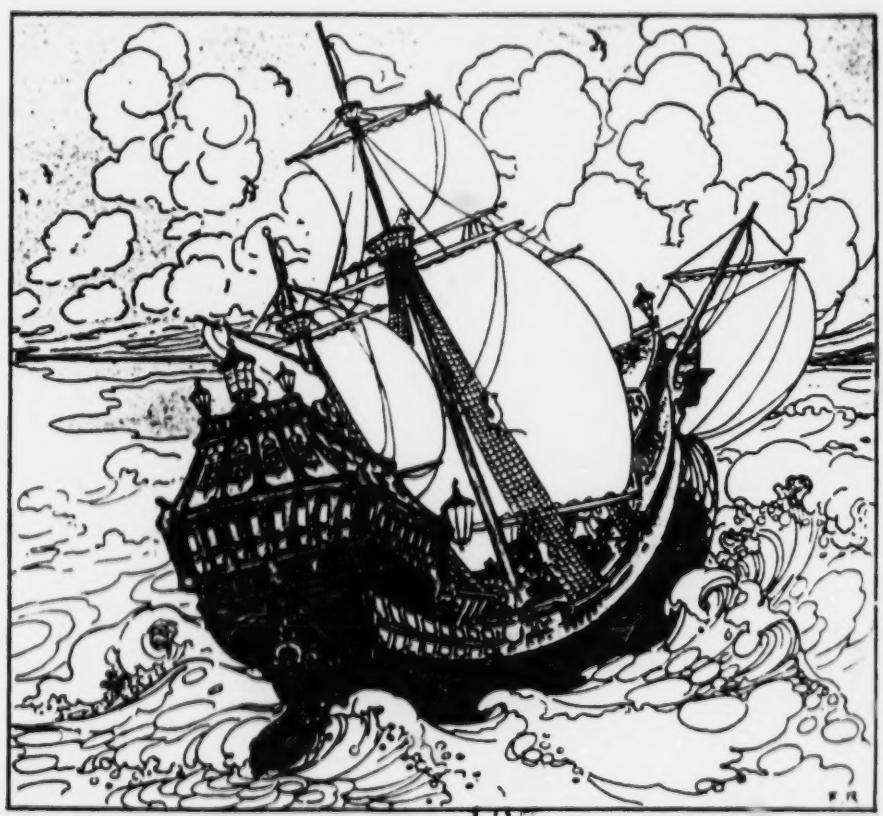

by Robert J. Gerardi

# 12 Ways to Reduce Stress—
## Advice to Administrators to Stay Healthy

I am in my 41st year in education, my 35th as an administrator. Over the years I have seen many of my colleagues suffer heart attacks, ulcers and other stress-related diseases, some of which were fatal. I consider these as avoidable occupational hazards for the principal, headmaster or superintendent of schools.

What can an administrator do to avoid or reduce stress? The following are things that I have done.

1. **Never stay in one position too long.**
I strongly believe that an administrator should change positions at least every five years. In that time frame, the challenges that could be met have been met. Those that were not met probably will never be met. It doesn't matter how much the board and community members want you to stay. Leave on a high note when everything is going well.

2. **Take a workshop in time management.**
This will make you more effective in all aspects of your job. You will change the way you do certain things and what and to whom you delegate. You will have more control over your office and your interactions. It will improve your performance.

3. **Maintain a sense of humor.**
Take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself seriously...you are funny. Somewhere, someone is probably laughing at you right now.

4. **Try to be an optimist.**
See the glass as half full instead of half empty. Success is as much a matter of attitude as of hard work and talent. If you focus on the negative, it will get to you.

5. **Avoid doing things that make you resentful.**
Too many late night meetings or too many working weekends breed tension and anger. Make it clear to yourself that you have a life outside your job. It is in your best interest, not to mention your family and colleagues, that you remain a healthy, vital person with a variety of interests and activities

6. **Teach yourself to "turn off" the job when you leave the office and not "turn it on" until you return the next day.**
I usually don't discuss any of my office concerns at home. That is family time and to rehash the office issues would be negative for me.

7. **Write for publication.**

When I began my education career, I never considered myself much of a writer because I was a math/science major. However, after I finished my doctorate, I had time on my hands and started writing about things that happened at work. Usually they were "how to" articles, i.e. "How to Handle a Fatal School Bus Accident." Later I started writing about my hobbies. At this time I have about 300 published articles, and each time I receive one that has been published, I am able to congratulate myself for a job well done.

8. Develop a hobby.

At different times I have been involved in photography (40 years), taken up flying (five years), traced my genealogy (seven years) and engaged in metal detecting (14 years). I usually do one almost exclusively until I become satieted and then move on to another interest. Other interests are important for your well-being and make you an interesting, well-rounded person.

9. Never take it personally.

I may give my all to an issue, but if it is defeated, I can forget the defeat and do what has to be done. I will support the majority opinion all the time, regardless of my opinion. I also make it a point to be especially cordial to those on the other side of any issue after the heat of debate.

10. No one gets to the top alone, without the help of others, and no one stays on top alone. Develop a support system within and outside your organization. If you don't have a mentor, acquire one. Become a mentor yourself. Join and become involved in your associations. Membership is a major source of my professional development and collegial support. There are incredible opportunities today for involvement. Seize them and make a difference.

11. Exercise.

Obviously, your age will determine the kind of exercise that you will perform. At my age, I simply try to walk five miles a day. I say try, because I don't walk when it's too hot or too cold. An exercise machine or simple calisthenics may be best suited for you. If you are a young person, more strenuous sports may be appropriate. Whatever you do, it will reduce stress and make you feel better due to the release of endorphins.

12. Get an annual physical.

It doesn't matter if you have felt great every day of your life. Even if you haven't been to a doctor in 30 years, you need to make the appointment. Have a physical, blood analysis, and x-rays if recommended. This becomes more important as you grow older because you can still feel good when something is wrong with you. In education, early intervention is the most effective method for treating children with deficiencies. In life, the annual physical is the best method of detecting and dealing with a health problem.

I hope what has been "good" for me will be helpful to others as they provide educational leadership to those with whom they work. Education needs all the healthy leaders it can get and keep.

Robert J. Gerardi is superintendent of schools of School Administrative District 58, (R. R. #1, Box 1580, Kingfield, Maine 04947). He has been recognized by the editors of Executive Educator magazine as one of the top 100 school administrators in North America.

William Watson Purkey and Paula Helen Stanley

# Invite School Success— A Treasury of 1001 Ideas

William Watson Purkey and Paula Helen Stanley are authors of *1001 Ways to Invite School Success — The Inviting School Treasury*. She works in the department of counselor education at Radford University, Virginia. He is professor of counselor education in the school of education, the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.

The basis of the text is the "new" field of invitational education, says Dr. Purkey. This is a practice to create a school environment to summon people to realize their boundless potential in all areas of worthwhile human activity. Drs. Purkey and Stanley write that "The purpose is to make learning, teaching, leading and living an exciting, satisfying and enriching experience for everyone in and around schools."

The five propositions of invitational education are:

1. Education should be a cooperative activity.
2. Process is as important as product.
3. People are able, valuable and responsible and should be treated accordingly.
4. People possess untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor.
5. Potential can best be realized through programs and processes designed to invite development, by people who intentionally unite with themselves and others.

The treasury book is organized in 50 categories such as academic achievement, birthdays, classroom management, counseling services, student/teacher evaluation motivation, professionalism and self concept.

The text can be used by teachers, administrators, counselors — most anyone involved with life in and around schools.

An editor of a staff newsletter could select several items to use in a special "invitation" section in each issue of the newsletter.

Following are ideas from the text:

**Practice Pigeon Walking.** When pigeons are walking, they usually stop after each step or two to look around and figure out where they are going. It's a sort of refocusing. Administrators can pigeon walk by pausing from time to time to see where they are, where they've been and where they are going.

**Pat some backs.** Give complete, full and prompt recognition for a job well done. Too often, the only feedback faculty and staff receive is negative. Make a special effort to compliment good work.

**Arrange "cracker barrel" lunches.** Plan a regular time when you can have some quality time with a small group of students. This luncheon can give an administrator time to meet students informally and obtain a feeling for students who need special attention.

**Listen to the ice.** Experienced woods people in the far north know how to listen to the ice of a frozen pond to tell how thick or thin it is. Administrators should listen to people even when time is limited or when one does not feel like listening. It might prevent a dunking in ice-cold waters.

**Encourage cooperative learning.** One of the most exciting and innovative practices in contemporary education is pairing students of different performance levels. Ensure that each student has a clear responsibility for part of the assignment.

**Go first class.** Take pride in every letter or announcement that goes from the office to the

home. Check carefully for spelling, syntax and grammar. Every written communication represents the school and everyone in it. Correspondence to families should not be written in haste or anger.

Let the good news roll. It is never a question of whether or not schools have public relations; it is a question of what kind. Take every opportunity to let the public learn about schools, including ordering extra copies of the yearbook for distribution to all community doctor and dentist offices, sending school newsletters to community and business leaders, and arranging for visits from the local news media to spotlight special activities.

Involve parents in clubs. Ask parents about their talents and hobbies. Questionnaires or surveys can be used. Parents may help sponsor or work with clubs in which they have talents or skills to offer. For example, a parent with the ability to square dance might sponsor a club for students. A parent who is interested in astronomy may help with an astronomy club at school.

Hold a Bus Driver Day. Have a special day to recognize bus drivers. It does not have to be an extravagant affair — invite them in for lunch and say a few words of appreciation — but the recognition will go a long way in identifying the vital role these support staff play in school. The bus driver is the first person to see the students after they leave home and the last before they return home. The tone they set is very important to the school.

Take a poll. Ask students "What would you like to learn?" Plan and conduct mini-course electives — once-a-week sessions perhaps — that can help to involve average students in school activities. Learning martial arts or Oriental cooking can be a great entree to academic subject matter.

Stage weekly art exhibits. Whether the work of a student, teacher or another person in the school, spotlight a person's work in some art medium for a week. Include a photo of the person in the display.

Plant a time capsule. The new year is a good time to make some resolutions. Invite students to write some positive changes they want for themselves. Place these in self-addressed envelopes and seal them away for a period of time. At the end of the time period, open the capsule and distribute the letters.

Hold an Alumni Day. Sponsor an alumni day for former students. A dinner or lunch may be provided with present and former teachers available to interact with the alumni. Hold question and answer sessions with them for present students. Some alumni have relatives who may still be enrolled in the school, and they may have continued interest in its success. These are the ones who are most likely to vote for continued support of education.

Hold a breakfast for Realtors. Most people involved in real estate may be too busy to attend a lunch or dinner but an early breakfast is always welcome. After the breakfast, present a short program on a special activity or give a brief tour. Realtors find information gained at these occasions valuable when working with house hunting families.

Encourage participation at the counseling center. Invite faculty members to visit the center at a happy hour on occasion. Solicit suggestions from parents, teachers and students about ways the school counseling program can be improved. Help people add to their feeling that this is "our" program.

*1001 Ways to Invite School Success*, first published by Scholastic Inc. in 1994, is now available from the International Alliance for Invitational Education in a hardback edition of 223 pages. The price is $28, payment with order, or $31 if an order is to be billed. Contact Dr. William Watson Purkey care of the Department of Counseling, UNC Greensboro, Greensboro, NC 27412.

## Case Study Response

# PIE: An Enlarged View

by Ernest E. Ramirez

Superintendent Janet Atlanta's reactions to the drug incident and how she transmits the position of the Wilbur public schools on the matter will determine whether the district continues to be externally-controlled or will move in the direction of independence. I sense that she will confidently answer all the media's questions and concerns honestly and forthrightly. If she does anything less than that, the integrity of the Wilbur public school system will be endangered even more, and her superintendency will have lost whatever credibility it does have.

As the superintendent speaks to the community through the auspices of the media, several essential steps must occur. First, she must acknowledge that while the intent of the volunteer program is sound, it is unfortunate that some volunteers have abused it by advancing their own ends. While making the admission that something wrong has happened, Superintendent Atlanta must move on to the greater challenge, namely, providing leadership at a dismal time.

Since she has the attention of the community, she should use the opportunity to make some much needed observation about how the Wilbur public schools are perceived by the various publics of the community, and accompany the observations with some announcements for substantive changes. If she is prepared to lead and is smart about the challenges that lay ahead, Superintendent Atlanta will use her motto, "it happens in the classroom," to not only diffuse the effects of the drug incident but to announce the schools' enlarged view of the Pride in Education (PIE) program.

This view would reconstruct the Wilbur public schools by assessing success through a renewed theory of school management. The foundation of the new PIE program acknowledges the public schools as "a community of learners." All people directly associated with the Wilbur public schools will be "learners" and be responsible for developing educational plans based on intellectual, personal, social, and vocational strengths. All educational plans will be defined, described, and developed from the learner's strengths, talents, values, aspirations, and ideas. If this foundation of the renewed PIE program is appropriately performed, the Wilbur public schools will be responding to the central question, "Who are we in the Wilbur public schools?"

A realistic human resources configuration

would then be in place as an outcome of the building of Wilbur's community of learners. Superintendent Atlanta would focus on its three significant functions of recruitment, selection and induction. If these functions are deliberately and thoughtfully executed by Wilbur's school leaders in identifying professional and non-professional personnel, then the immediate outcome is retention of personnel.

A major component of the renewed PIE program is the importance of information. Information on all aspects of the schools' operations will be gathered by Wilbur's school leaders using quantitative and qualitative measures. Community groups of all types and interests will be brought into the system as part of the global view "community of learners," and members of community groups will hold faculty status within the framework of Wilbur's "community of learners."

At her press conference, Superintendent Atlanta would be well-served by focusing on the benefits of school ownership. Summarily, the sense of community is extended to all groups, friendly and hostile, through the invitation of gathering and sharing information.

Finally, the major outcome of the renewed PIE program would be the empowerment of Wilbur's school personnel. The superintendent can impress the meaning of empowerment on the media in such a way that her statements on this point alone may capture the headlines of the community's print and broadcast media. Every Wilbur learner becomes empowered when he/she is given opportunities to manage his/her educational plan.

Superintendent Atlanta needs to share with the community the reality of the situation. It is not the drug incident that is driving us insane. It is the divisions that have been created over the years when superintendents have chosen to lead the public schools through linear principles and practices. The addition of bureaucracy will not alleviate the Wilbur school problems. The demands thrust on us by the Texesee Education Agency only makes us more inept as we attempt to solve our problems.

Oberg's case study demonstrates occurrences that frequent those public schools which are extraordinarily top-down in their managerial principles and practices. An immediate outcome of the heaviness is the inadvertent creation of hostilities from various groups expressed as outright aggression to avoidance. The enduring outcome is, however, the same — the school district is rapidly sapped of its energies. It seems to me that this is what has happened in the Wilbur public schools. There are no legitimate reasons why this particular public school system should be burdened by so many problems which seemingly have no foundations. If Superintendent Atlanta is able to reconstruct the district in the direction of community oriented learning, then any dilemmas or problems occurring can be readily traced to this foundation.

When Janet finished addressing the Wilbur community at the press conference brought about by the drug incident, she will have established the foundation for her role as a major cultural leader in the Wilbur public schools. As such, she will always be able to define, describe, and develop the ideology of "the community of learners" as the Wilbur public schools continue to bring school personnel together in their search for the learner's intellectual, personal, social, and vocational strengths.

Ernest E. Ramirez is assistant professor of educational administration in the Department of Human Services at Villanova University (P.O. Box 650, Conshocken, PA 19428-0650).

# Study Shows Limited Links between Directors of Community Education and of Public Relations

by Robert J. Lyster

A new study shows that while there are some definite public relations links between school public relations and community education directors, many of those links are not as strong as some authors have predicted. A survey of 25 task statements was sent to 150 public school PR directors and 150 community education directors to ascertain the similarities and differences in their duties and responsibilities. Results showed that while they both perform many of the same functions, they have significant differences in their priorities — none of the top five tasks are duplicated in the two groups as shown below:

## Top Five Priority Tasks

### PR Directors

1. Coordinates communications to various media.
2. Writes news releases.
3. Develops brochures for the school district.
4. Attends board meetings.
5. Prepares district-wide newsletters of newspapers for the district.

### CE Directors

1. Develops short-range and long-range CE or PR planning strategies for the school system.
2. Handles complaints and comments about the district or community education.
3. Attends administrative team meetings.
4. Consults with administrators at the building level on PR or CE matters.
5. Assists in the district-wide development of community programs geared to various groups.

Similarly, the tasks given lowest priority also differ:

## Lowest Five Priority Tasks

### PR Directors

1. Develops and provides training for K-12 teachers.
2. Develops and provides CE or PR inservice for school board members.
3. Coordinates volunteer programs.
4. Assists in the district-wide development of community programs geared to various groups.
5. Conducts financial referenda campaigns.

### CE Directors

1. Conducts financial referenda campaigns.
2. Designs and produces audio-visual materials.
3. Produces newsletters for the staff.
4. Develops and provides CE education or PR inservice for school board members.
5. Develops and provides training for K-12 teachers.

School PR directors did not consider five survey tasks to be part of their roles, while eight were considered outside the realm of CE directors' job performance. These are:

## Tasks Not Considered To Be Part of Duties

### PR Directors

- Conducts financial referenda campaigns.
- Develops and provided training for K-12 teachers.
- Coordinates volunteer programs.
- Develops and provides CE or PR inservice for school board trustees.
- Assists in the district-wide development of community programs geared to various groups.

### CE Directors

- Conducts financial referenda campaigns.
- Develops and provided training for K-12 teachers.
- Coordinates volunteer programs.
- Develops and provides CE or PR inservice for school board trustees.
- Produces newsletters for the staff.
- Acts as a spokesperson for the chief executive of the school system.
- Takes and/or develops photographs.
- Designs and produces audio/visual materials.

The CE directors reported that they perform most of the public relations tasks in the survey form, however only a few possessed any type of significant public relations training. This indicates that future community education seminars and workshops should include significant training in various public relations tasks such as those listed in the survey. These should include, but not be limited to, training in desktop publishing so CE directors will be able to develop and produce brochures, newsletters, and advertising to promote their various programs.

Public school PR directors indicated an almost lack of community education training. They also generally have much less training in public relations through higher education courses and/or seminars and workshops. Therefore, school administrators should encourage PR directors to attend courses and workshops which would help them improve their skills in these areas.

Both CE and PR directors who work in the nation's small school districts say that they are usually the only person performing these two functions. Thus the study indicated that both types of directors should participate in cross-training to guarantee some level of expertise in both areas.

Again, as in the case of school district size, there are significantly more CE directors in the smallest communities (below 10,000 population) than there are PR directors (27% compared with 7%). The PR directors tend to make up this difference in communities of 50,000-99,999, 5% and 100,000-249,999, 10%.

According to previous studies, PR directors often come from the ranks of teachers, not administrators, and the results of this study showed agreement. A majority of PR directors' (56.2) education was limited to a bachelor

degree, the same as that mandated for teachers. On the other hand, it is generally concluded that CE directors usually are administrators, and again, this study reflects agreement since almost 80% have an advanced degree (master, 66.1% or doctorate, 12.7%) and most states or school districts require administrators to have an administrator's certificate which includes the requirement of an advanced degree. The population for this study consisted of 672 public school PR directors who were members of the National School Public Relations Association and listed in the 1993 NSPRA directory and 437 school districts listed in the 1993 National Community Education Association directory. The NCEA letters were sent to school districts and generically addressed to the CE director because there is no designation of community education directors in the NCEA directory. A total of 300 surveys were mailed, 150 sent to each group.

The characteristics of respondents were determined through a series of 13 demographic questions. Public relations directors tended to be females (68.9%) between the ages of 40-49 (46.3%), while CE directors were split almost evenly on gender with 51.7 percent female and 48.3 percent male. They were also mainly in the 40-49 age group (47.5%).

The vast majority of respondents in both fields are working full time in either public relations (74.4%) or community education (81.4%), and most PR and CE directors come from small schools, almost 70% from each group from school districts having less than 12,000 students. 20% more CE directors (64.1%) than PR directors ($43.0%) are in the smallest school districts having less than 6,000 students.

The 25 task statements in the survey form were based on a five-point Likert scale: (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) usually, (5) always. With 3 being the midpoint of the scale, statements were considered to have been answered positively if they had a mean of 3.0 or higher. Once this had been determined, then the Chi-square of the two groups was examined to determine whether there were differences between the groups. In each of the statements, the Chi-square was determined based upon four degrees of freedom.

The model, designed by the researcher after an extensive review of the literature and testing, consisted of three parts: 13 demographic questions in Part I, 25 task statements in Part II, and two open-ended questions in Part III to give respondents an opportunity to detail additional tasks.

A total of 118 community education and 121 public relations surveys were returned for a total of 239. Factoring out returns of questionnaires where programs (18) had been dropped, the rate of return was 84.8%.

Robert Lyster is director of continuing education at U.S. Sports Academy (One Academy Dr., Daphne, AL 36526).

by Bill Carr

# Communication Failure Can Threaten Progress

There's a problem growing in the education community. It may not attract a great deal of news media attention, but it is real and significant and, if left unchecked, it may undermine serious, well-intentioned efforts to reform education.

The problem? Communication gridlock.

For much of the past three years, Public Agenda has maintained close contact with the issues and players involved in the education reform debate. Through several national research reports, we have examined the perspectives and concerns of major reform stakeholders—teachers, principals, administrators, parents, school board members, and superintendents.

Through citizen education campaigns in newspapers and on television, we have worked closely with communities struggling to raise the level of public dialogue about education and economic competitiveness.

As Public Agenda has focused on this issue, we have noticed a common thread of miscommunication—and misunderstanding about the importance of communication—among the education communities with which we have worked.

We have been struck by the number of education leaders who continue to be wary of "outsiders" — from business, the news media or the general public — becoming too involved in reform discussions.

## Dual Dilemma

The communication dilemma is two-fold. On one hand, the problem is internal, within the education community itself. Our recent research report, "Divided Within, Besieged Without: The Politics of Education Reform in Four American School Districts" points out that education stakeholders — the very people who need to work together to achieve real progress in reforming our schools — seem continually pulled apart by deeply entrenched fears, suspicions, prejudices, and turf battles.

During our research, we found teachers who had such little contact with administrators that they learned more about policy changes in their schools from the press than from leadership. We found parents who suspected that educators deliberately made it difficult for them to obtain information and register concerns. We also found administrators who were so buffeted by teacher skepticism that they believed any effort to reach out to educators

*We have been struck by the number of education leaders who continue to be wary of "outsiders" —from business, the news media or the general public—becoming too involved in reform discussions.*

would be viewed as a publicity stunt.

The communications divide within the education community is great and stands as a significant obstacle to reform.

## Public Engagement

The education community also is plagued by a significant external communication problem. Educators have, in many respects, failed to engage the general public in an open, two-way dialogue on the need for school reform.

Public Agenda has pinpointed three distinct examples of how and why educators fall short in this regard. We also have gained insights into how they might begin to communicate better.

•*Instant public engagement.*

In many communities, reformers spend a great deal of time discussing among themselves the pros and cons of alternative proposals to improve the schools. After deciding on a course of action, they announce it to the public, assuming people will immediately embrace the proposed reforms. They are shocked when their proposals, as is frequently the case, are received coolly.

The problem often lies not so much with the reforms themselves but the way leaders have communicated about them — or, more accurately, not communicated. Public engagement does not happen overnight. The public needs ample time and opportunity to consider the benefits and drawbacks of various reforms — the same time and opportunity leaders themselves already have had.

•*The tin ear.*

In many cases, leaders do make serious efforts to involve the public in the reform discussion, but ironically, after soliciting the public's input, they ignore or de-legitimize its views. Consider the following example.

Public Agenda recently worked with the New Standards Project to determine how people respond to different proposals aimed at raising academic standards. When we asked citizens how they felt about "heterogenous grouping," many people said they were very uncomfortable with the idea. Among people's misgivings about the proposal: Would low-achieving students be made to feel inferior? Would higher achievers be held back, spending all their time teaching rather than learning? Would teachers be less effective?

But many education leaders seemed unwilling to accept the public's concern at face value. They believed people's fears about heterogeneous grouping stemmed from racism. Yet survey data show that African American parents have the same qualms about heterogeneous grouping that white parents do. By failing to hear what the public was really saying — and by delegitimizing its views — leaders drastically reduced the changes for productive conversation on this proposal.

This pattern holds true with regard to other public concerns about education, too. Survey after survey — including one of Public Agenda's most recent reports on education, First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools — has shown that when it comes to discussions of school reform, the public is preoccupied with three main issues, safety, order and basic skills.

But rather than trying to gain a better understanding of the public's concerns and addressing them head-on, too many leaders dismiss them as evidence of "how little people understand about what is happening in schools today." They press on with their own agenda, calling for "new assessments" and "certificates of mastery" for "site-based management" and "outcome-based education."

Meanwhile, much of the public — con-

DRUGS

fused about what these reforms really mean and frustrated because their concerns have not been addressed — tunes out of the discussion.

• *Fear of flying.*

Education leaders sometimes fail to understand what public engagement entails or fail to listen carefully to the public's concerns, but in some cases the communication problem is deeper. Public Agenda has found some instances where educators simply are reluctant to invite the public into the reform dialogue.

Why are some educators so hesitant to initiate a public dialogue on school reform? In our research, we have been struck by the number of education leaders who continue to be wary of "outsiders" — whether from business, the news media, or the general public — becoming too involved in reform discussions.

What's more, we have found that leaders sometimes mistake public ambivalence about the current direction of public schools or proposed reform agenda with lack of concern. Since some educators believe the public "doesn't care about children and underserved communities" or has turned its back on the public schools, they see no point in trying to talk with or listen to members of their community.

• *Understanding Reform.*

Those who care about the future of public schools need to recognize the importance of communicating with the public more openly and honestly. This is more important today than ever. The education reform movement, launched with such high hopes several years ago, is encountering stiff resistance from many parents, teachers, taxpayers, and community leaders — individuals who were expected to be supporters.

But until citizens understand why reform is necessary, what logic brought leaders to propose particular reforms, and how these reforms will affect their community and children, they are unlikely to endorse broad changes in the schools.

The education community faces a great challenge. For school reform to succeed will require the understanding and support of the real education community — the parents, teachers, and students who will either make change happen or fight it every step of the way.

Bill Carr is assistant director of communication for the Public Agenda Foundation (6 E. 39th St., New York, NY 10016). Public Agenda is a non-profit, non-partisan public opinion firm. This article is reprinted, with permission from the School Administrator, published by the American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209-9988. Public Agenda's latest publication is Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform. The report explores why support for public schools is in jeopardy and the attitudes of people regarding "higher standards and the value of education and knowledge. The publication is available for $12.50, shipping included each from the organization. Telephone: 212-686-6610; fax 212-889-3461.

# Community Identity, Knowledge Are The Purpose Of This Guide

The local library and public school district in a Pittsburgh, PA, suburb joined forces to produce a community guide for patrons.

The 78-page guide provides a comprehensive directory and analysis of all the municipal, governmental, religious, health, recreation and related agencies and organizations in the area served by the Fox Chapel School District and the Laurie Ann West Library.

Bonnie Berzonski, coordinator of communications, says the publication is valued by residents, especially new families, as it is the only single reference to services and programs in their suburban community.

Among the organizations covered in the guide, in addition to the sponsoring library and public schools, are senior citizens services; private, parochial, nursery and day schools; hospitals and medical services; fire departments; recreation and community agencies; state government; tax collection agencies; and non-profit organizations.

Such a guide can be financed through contributions of organizations covered, ads by businesses and sponsors such as large utilities, department stores, supermarkets, etc.

A coordinator and staff, possibly composed of volunteers, will be necessary for three to four months to prepare listings, obtain copy approval from agencies covered, sell and develop ads and arrange for corporate sponsors.

This publication can be especially useful in a suburban area where a school district crosses municipal lines, and developing a sense of community is otherwise difficult. The costs of preparation and printing need to be forecast in detail and a plan to cover the costs or a library authority to approve the invitation of such a publication will be required.

Pages from the district/library community guide illustrate the variety of organizations covered in it. A copy of the publication is available from Bonnie Berzonski, Fox Chapel Schools, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238. Be sure to enclose a 9"x12" stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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by Jack L. Kennedy

# BUILDING POSITIVES MUST START WITH EDUCATORS

When darkness seems to cover education, who's responsible for the eclipse?

Sometimes, it looks like the various contentious publics and the print and electronic media are always focused on the dark side. One-tenth of a point behind East Finland on international math scores means the decline of American civilization is at hand, some in the media suggest. And do we really need all those fancy new buildings with outlets for computers kids' parents cannot understand? Most of all, do schools need to take an ever-increasing bite out of the tax dollar, stretching scarce family resources even further, people ask.

School administrators and teachers squirm when they hear these simplistic sayings. Fractional test score differences often mean little, they know, unless they are part of the multi-year pattern of constant decline. Repeated votes on tax or building bond levies strain districts, while students suffer. The irritation that school board members, administrators and teachers feel, however, is often their own fault.

They have failed to tell their own stories candidly, openly and constantly, until a building is about to fall and a levy is about to fail and then they realize that it is too late.

Particularly in today's climate, public relations must be more than crisis communications. It must be more than press releases or egg-on-face statements from officials. Real communication must be constant and personal, blunting the need for any criticisms before they can arise.

Accomplishing that is the role of everyone in a school system or college or university, but that philosophy is often hard to sell.

Some examples will illustrate this point:

• A few years ago, I spoke to a University of Nebraska-Lincoln class on the need to be open, honest and pro-active, not reactive.

I felt pretty good about myself as I left the classroom filled with graduate students in education administration. The students had listened intently as I explained my role and why I had spent more than 30 years as a journalist covering education. The teachers and administrators seemed to understand the urgency of informing the press about what is happening in classrooms.

I stressed that journalists as well as educators are under pressure. I reminisced passionately about my own small-town teaching experience, and told the class how much better, on the whole, I think education is today. I talked about the Education Writers Association, which I served as president for three years, and its in-service training. We, too, have our competence judged, I reminded the educators.

We discussed the importance of candor, sharing and of being willing to tell the public educators' story if they expect taxpayer and parent and non-parent support. I thought I had made my point.

As I left, I found a teacher trailing me.

"I really loved your presentation," she said, immediately boosting my already pretty

positive self-image. "**But**," she added quickly, breaking my happy spell, "**I could never give you a call about what I'm doing. I know it's important, but I don't want my colleagues to think I'm hogging the spotlight. Besides the superintendent and the board might not approve.**"

That brief conversation has crossed my mind often. With that much timidity, how can educators ever hope to tell the story of what is really happening in schools? How can battle-bound special interest groups ever get enough information to judge for themselves what the level of performance is or whether a levy raise or bond issue or tax increases are justified?

• A few years ago, a small college was in trouble. Enrollment had soared under a creative president. But innovation was his skill, not management. When his successor arrived, he found a sound academic program that was saddled with a million-dollar deficit and few students signed up for the following fall.

An incisive reporter learned of the financial and marketing problem and published a detailed account of his findings. Many supporters and staff members were angry when they read the article as they had viewed themselves as being part of a cloistered world. Its budget was a private matter, the college's staff argued.

Fortunately the new president realized that this was a time to be open, to talk about the budget situation frankly, and to lay out on paper specific plans for beginning to erase the budget and enrollment problems. He realized that the school would not continue to receive money from donors if they thought it would be poorly administered. Few students or their parents would be enthusiastic about attending a school that was on shaky ground.

Thanks to the openness and planning that the new administrator brought, with willingness to admit past errors publicly while exhibiting some confidence that they would be corrected, the fiscal problems began to ease. Enrollment began to rebound. The school broadened its market and its outlook.

The problems were not solved overnight, but the public now knew, the media knew, potential students knew what they could expect from the institution.

• A skilled communicator had just taken over the PR post in a small public college so tiny and unassuming that legislators often had threatened to close it. But under an energetic new president in his 30s, the staff had begun to define the college's function and to gain some stability for the school.

Then the creative but somewhat mercurial president left town under pressure. For some time, he was nowhere to be found. Rumor had it that the president had decided to make a sudden career move into the fast-food business, leaving the board and the harried new public relations man holding a bag of soggy fries.

When news media called to inquire, the communcations guru had to invent several different versions of "no comment," which only increased the mistrust. He wasn't trying to evade. He honestly didn't know anything about the president's disappearance, or future plans for the school. **The board and the remaining administrators had not bothered to fill him in on even the base essentials of the president's departure** or whether the staff had things firmly in hand without the burger baron.

The college did survive its trauma, finally, but its hour of darkness had lasted far too long. The college's authorities failed to be decisive and did not trust their spokesperson who could have been of great help with internal and external audiences.

To their credit, not all administrators are

as reclusive.

• During the tumult of the 1960s civil rights era, a large Kansas school system faced the tensions created by busing plans. Board members disputed over how to best battle the federal government's desire to control the district, while dealing with the realization that more must be done for minority students and neighborhoods.

The superintendent was seen as somewhat of a patrician by many of his patrons, even his supporters. He meant well, but seemed to speak in a foreign language when English was needed instead. The district had only recently hired a communications director, and he did not appear to have a clear public relations-community clarity policy in place, either in practice or in writing.

The superintendent became frustrated by the confusing signals he was getting from various emotional special interest groups and some of his own troops. So, the boss of the 40,000-student system decided to learn public opinion first-hand. He donned some old clothes, and **set out door-to-door** in areas where officialdom has been either never seen or, if it was, often distrusted.

That move was a bit extreme. As his trek became known, the superintendent came under fire as his critics saw his behavior as grandstanding. It ran counter to his public image and his patrician persona, they said. His fans, of course, thought it was good down-to-earth communications, a sign of sincerity and character.

No one would advocate that Chicago's superintendent of the minute put all of her communications money into shoe leather, or that any embattled superintendent in a community of any size should attempt to disguise himself or herself and head out on a similar safari. But it's a lot better than hiding out, literally or figuratively. And the move showed that the administrator was eager to try something new, to open up, to create the impression that he really cared about the public and their opinions.

The well-meaning but timid teacher who trailed behind, saying she could never tell what's happening in the classroom, is at the other end of this public relations pole. She probably did a good job and inspired generations of junior high or middle school math students or readers, but the public would never learn of her charm, skill and devotion.

The big city boss from the 1960s knew that communication is more than press releases, crisis comments and glossy brochures. The small college president realized that he had to be open with people he knew that he had to build trust—among his staff and the various publics.

These examples illustrate the need for educators to open doors, talk with people, listen to them and be candid. They need to work with communication professionals, who should be on the management team. And boards and CEOs need to look inward. They must be sure that staff members have a voice in deciding the direction of the organization; an involved and informed staff will be likely to support the institution with its external audiences, especially in times of a crisis.

The superintendent, communications head, president and others must be seen and heard in everyday contexts. They must not expect written press releases or staff newsletters or TV shows to do all of the work. Personal contact in good times as well as bad is essential.

Leaders in some districts are using new tools in an effort to communicate. They believe in the personal touch, although they may not send the superintendent out door-to-door. They know that a variety of com-

muncations avenues can help avoid future problems.

**Another example:**

Authorities in the district had their doubts a few years ago when a citizen watchdog group suggested, and helped finance, televising of school board meetings on the local cable public access channel. There were fears that this would only add more fuel to whatever the current fire was, as malcontents sat at home watching the show. Or that board member and audience alike would play to the cameras to advance their causes.

Costs were minimal as the cable officials and others helped provide equipment. Teachers and others volunteered as camera operators. When not in use for ponderous policy discussions, the board room and cameras have become the keystone of a realistic high school broadcast journalism course. School officials who have been apprehensive at first are now much more supportive, a longtime staff member says.

Such instances are less prevalent than they were when the cable TV broadcasts were new, and may have other benefits. When a PTA officer and three students make a report, or when a longtime staff member is cited on the screen, cable viewers see it, and may form a lasting, positive impression of the institution and its staff.

Trying new approaches to communication and, above all, encouraging each staff member at every level to share the good things that are happening in schools, will help avoid future eclipses. Don't blame others for creating darkness if you have been unwilling or unable to let in the light yourself.

Jack L. Kennedy is a former president of the Education Writers Association and has written about schools across the nation for more than 31 years as an education reporter for the Lincoln Journal and the Wichita Eagle newspapers. He now is an education consultant/author (1551 S. Cotner Blvd., Lincoln, NE 68506-1233).

Salem-Keizer School District

# USE THE COMMUNITY TO ENRICH THE CURRICULUM

A primary goal for the Community Resource Guide published annually by the Salem-Keizer School District in Salem, Oregon, is to enrich the regular classroom curriculum.

Holly Moline is the district's community education coordinator and is in charge of producing the annual guide. It is used often by teachers to plan for classroom speakers, field trips, job shadowing opportunities, performers or materials that can be used for curricular or extra-curricular purposes, she says.

She cautions that it takes hundreds of hours of research and data entry to evaluate and prepare listings. But teachers do use the guide regularly and students benefit from having experiences with a variety of resource people and agencies, either in the classroom or in the community.

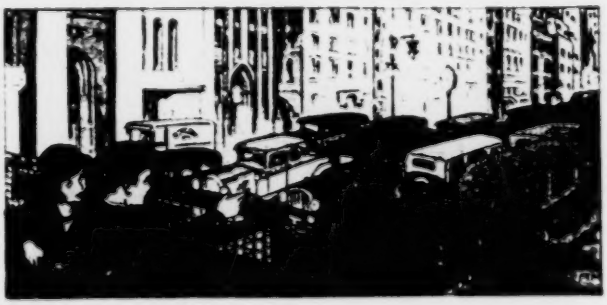
(An added overall value is the sense of contribution and support that resource people gain from being of direct help to teachers and students.)

Holly reports that preparing such a guide is an ongoing process. "You'll never be completely done; as people learn about the guide, they will recommend new resources. Contact people, address and phone numbers change frequently. After the first guide is published, you'll be updating and adding to it regularly."

She recommends that people wishing to issue such a guide plan to take at least six months for the first one. The person in charge will need to work with a committee of teachers and staff members to decide on categories and learn of currently used resource people and possible additional ones. A cadre of volunteers will be needed to collect specific information and permissions for people to be included. A computer program will have to be written and several people, staff or volunteers, will have to be trained to enter items.

Before a resource — a place or a person — is listed, the guide coordinator or a person working on the guide committee should visit the facility or otherwise inquire to be sure the best interests of students and the district will be served by its inclusion.

Once information is tabulated in a user-friendly manner, plan to produce the guide in sufficient quantities so each teacher and certified staff member has an individual copy. "We tried placing the information on a disk for use at each school, and teachers would not or could not use that system. The next year, we printed one copy for use at each school, and use was minimal. Only when we provided a copy for each teacher did use of



the guide become regular," she says. Printing the guide on newsprint, rather than on more expensive paper, should keep the cost under 10 cents for each copy.

Each month, the guide coordinator should issue, perhaps in the staff newsletter, a brief update — notes about people who no longer participate — changes in phone numbers or names of contact people, etc. If much of the content becomes outdated before the next edition, teachers will avoid using it midway through the school year.

Paperwork necessary to schedule use of a resource, when necessary, must not be overly detailed or time-consuming or the staff will not take the effort to use the guide. Excessive bureaucracy will tell the staff that the board/administration does not really support the program.

The school board or administration may wish to make some sort of provision to publicly recognize these community people and agencies who participate. Certificates suitable for display would be produced in-house and mailed with an appropriate letter from the board president or superintendent.

Preparing such a guide is hard, time-consuming work. A coordinator must be sure teachers will appreciate and use the resources. That can happen only if they have a hand in preparing content, they know about the guide, the information is user-friendly, and the teachers are encouraged by their peers and administrators to schedule resource people in the classroom or plan trips and visits.

These are selected pages from the 1994 Community Resource Guide published by the Salem-Keizer School District in Salem, Oregon. The guide is divided into 11 categories — such as art, business, careers, government, and life science — and each item is coded to indicate whether a resource is a speaker, field trip site, job shadowing site, media resource or performer. The guide also has a detailed index showing categories and suitable grade levels for each resource.

## Dos from Salem-Keizer

### *A Resource Guide Checklist:*

- Involve your teachers, parents, retirement centers, and chamber of commerce.
- Make the format simple.
- Use a teachers' advisory committee to be sure possible resources will be appropriate to the curriculum.
- Ask people in charge of a community resource to list all conditions — grade or age of students, numbers of students allowed per visit, time necessary for a visit, number of adult monitors necessary, how students should dress, what they should and should not being with them.
- Specify how to arrange a visit — person to contact, advance time needed, cost factors, how to confirm a planned visit, where to park a bus or vehicles.
- Show grade levels appropriate for each facility in the guide.
- Specify how each visit should be evaluated.
- Give one copy to each teacher, department head, supervisor of volunteers and mentors as well as officials of other agencies in the community.
- Suggest that teachers enlist a student to write an appropriate thank you note to each facility manager or resource person after each visit.

## Send for a guide:

*To obtain a sample community resource guide, send a stamped, self-addressed 9" by 12" envelope to Holly Moline, Salem-Keizer Schools, 2575 Commercial St., NE, Salem, OR 97302-4448.*

## HISTORY

**Albany Regional Museum** F
Grade Level: 2-6
302 Ferry
Albany, OR
**Phone:** 1-503-967-6540
Permanent exhibits include a general store and Director's office. Other exhibits vary. The museum charges a fee.

**American Advertising Museum** F
Grade Level: K-12
**Contact:** Kathleen Rooney
9 N.W. Second Avenue
Portland, OR 97209
**Phone:** 1-503-226-0000
This is the only museum devoted exclusively to advertising in the United States. It traces the history of American advertising from 1612 to the present and focuses on the media of print, radio, video and neon. Guided school tours begin with a talk on advertising and marketing and last approximately 1-1/2 hours. Self-guided group tours can also be arranged and usually last about an hour. There is a small admission fee for students, but teachers and parent chaperones are admitted free of charge.

**American History** S
Grade Level: 4-6
Contact: Howard Krick
7992 Sunnyview Road N.E.
Salem, OR 97305
**Phone:** 364-1155
Howard dresses, looks and acts like Ben Franklin. He is knowledgeable about Ben Franklin's life and times as well as the constitution. Each child receives a flag. A fee is charged. Related topics: government, entertainment (circus days and vaudeville presentation).

**Antique Powerland Inc.** F
Grade Level: 2-12
Contact: Western Antique Powerland
3995 Brooklake Road N.E.
Brooks, OR 97303
**Phone:** 393-2424
Museum of old agricultural equipment. Minimal fee for adults, but students under 12 years of age are admitted free.

**Archeology** S
Grade Level: 4-12
Contact: Frances Philipek
Bureau of Land Management
**Phone:** 375-5646 Ext. 5613
Will include history of Western Oregon, culture resource management, archeology in general.

**Archeology** S
Grade Level: 9-10
Contact: Mollie Doneka
Chemeketa Community College
**Phone:** 399-5194
Mollie will advise teachers and speak to high school students.

**Aurora Colony Historical Society** F
Grade Level: 4-12
15008 Second Street
P.O. Box 202
Aurora, OR 97002
**Phone:** 1- 503-678-5754
Guided tour of Ox Barn Museum, focusing on music, religious life, food, craftwork and school in Aurora Colony: self-guided tours to Kraus House, Wagon Shed, Steinbach Log Cabin and Pioneer Herb Garden focusing on craftsmanship and home construction, interior artifacts, metal work and harnessing, teas, medicines, fragrances and cooking herbs utilized by pioneer families. Admission fee charged.

**Bonneville Dam** F
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Pat Berry
**Phone:** 1-503-374-8820
Tour the generating plant and get an underwater view of the fish ladders. Information is presented on the history of river navigation. Students are able to view slides shows and films on site.

**Bush House** F
Grade Level: 3-6
Contact: Jennifer Haglock
600 Mission Street S.E.
Salem, OR 97302
**Phone:** 363-4714
Guided tour of Victorian mansion completed in 1878. Fine examples of original wallpapers, donated furnishings dating back to Victorian days. Admission fee is charged.

**Century Farm** M
Grade Level: 1-6
Contact: Marion County E.S.D.
**Phone:** 588-5385
Two historical kits have been developed for classroom use. The kits contain actual artifacts as well as classroom study guides. The kits describe the Egan Century Farm on North River Road in Keizer and the Hadley farm in Silverton.

# GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES

**Airport Host** F
Grade Level: 5-12
McNary Field
3030 25th Street S.E.
Salem, OR 97302
Contact: Russ Wittmer
**Phone:** 364-7845
Tour of airport by member of airport board. A classroom presentation precedes the field trip.

**Air Traffic Control** F, S
Grade Level: 5-12
McNary Field
3030 25th Street S.E.
Salem, OR 97302
Contact: Gary Bria
**Phone:** 399-5901
Tour the air traffic control tower and receive information on modern air traffic control procedures.

**American Government** S
Grade Level: 4-6
Contact: Howard Krick
**Phone:** 364-1155
Howard dresses and acts like Benjamin Franklin. He charges a fee for his presentations which include information on Benjamin Franklin, the constitution and the founding of America. He presents a flag to the school.

**City of Salem Park Tours** F
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Russ Richards
**Phone:** 588-6261
How parks are designed for educational value and public recreation. Russ could relate well with younger students. Ask about the outdoor recreation planning.

**Civil Rights** S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Geraldine Hammond
24J Coordinator of Multicultural Education
**Phone:** 399-3258
Geraldine is the district's multicultural coordinator and relates well to all ages. Geraldine grew up in the segregated South and can relate personal experiences and historical information. She also can provide training and materials to teachers.

**Civil Rights** S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: John Gentry
State Farm Insurance
**Phone:** 463-3476
John is a district parent, met Dr. King's father, and grew up in the segregated South.

**Civil Rights** S
Grade Level: 9-12
Contact: Michael Swaim, Attorney
**Phone:** 363-0063
Michael Swaim is a local civil rights attorney

**Civil Rights** S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Carlene Jackson
38123 Blair Road
Mollala, OR 97038
**Phone:** 373-1205
Carlene Jackson co-authored and co-hosted a television series on Afro American history. As the director of Oregon Economic Development she is difficult to schedule. She is very knowledgeable about the civil rights movement.

**Civil Rights** S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Al Lugo
**Phone:** 378-0070
Al has credentials in early childhood education and secondary education. He grew up in the south and is bilingual.

**Civil Rights** F
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Peggy Nelson Chemawa Indian School
**Phone:** 399-5721
An experienced teacher.Peggy may bring students to talk about personal stories of discrimination.

**Community Development** S
Grade Level: 9-12
Contact: Craig Luedeman
Marion County
**Phone:** 588-5038
Information on community development and economic issues: planning and land development.

**Community Helpers** F
Grade Level: K-4
Contact: Portland Children's Museum
**Phone:** 1-503-248-4587
Hands-on exhibits change. Examples are fire department, and grocery store. Call in advance. Free. Related topics: life science, earth science, physical science.

**Corrections** S, F
Grade Level: 7-12
Contact: Billy Wasson
Marion County Correction Institution
**Phone:** 588-8417
How the correctional system works, operations, budgeting, administration of programs, etc. County jail tours, phone 581-1183.

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**Salem Pioneer Cemetery** F
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Virginia Felton
Commercial and Hoyt Streets South
**Phone:** 364-1477
This cemetery is known as one of the most elaborate Victorian cemeteries in the Northwest. It was founded in 1841. This outdoor museum offers the history of those who settled in the Northwest. Among the nobles buried there are Samuel Roy Thurston, the first Congressional delegate from the Northwest to the U.S. Congress; Dr. William Holden Willson, Oregon's first treasurer; Asahel Bush II, founder/publisher of the Oregon Statesman and founder of the Ladd & Bush Bank; Captain Charles Bennett, among those who first discovered gold in California; and many other pioneers.

**Siletz Indians** S
Grade Level: 3-12
Contact: Selene Lynch, Confederated of Tribes of the Siletz
**Phone:** 1-800-922-1399
Selene will provide a history of the Siletz tribe. She brings artifacts and is interested in helping create correct images of Indians. No fee. Ask about possibility of dance demonstration. Related topics: cultures

**Silverton Country Museum** F
Grade Level: K-12
428 S. Water Street
Silverton, OR 97381
**Phone:** 1-503-873-5615
Old house with 1840-1900 furnishings, clothing dating from 1900, one-room school, old fashioned kitchen, children's room and doctor's office.

**Tillamook County Pioneer Museum** F
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: M.W. Jensen
2106 Second Street
Tillamook, OR 97141
**Phone:** 1-842-4553
Top floor is natural history. Main floor is Pioneer artifacts. The basement has logging exhibits.

**Tikal Indians** S
Grade Level: K-6
Contact: Dr. Leland Gilsen
State Historic Preservation Office
525 Trade Street S.E.
Salem, OR 97310
**Phone:** 378-6508
Dr. Gilsen has slides on the Tikal Indians and shares replicas of N.W. Indian artifacts including bows, arrows, fishing spears, clothing, atlatl and darts, knives, scrapers, fleshers, adzes, mat needles and creasers, rattles, clubs, splitting wedges, fire drills,fire drills,bull roarer, clubs, awls, flintknapping equipment and more. He is the State Historic Preservation Office archaeologist and works for State Parks in Salem.

## HOLIDAYS

**Arbor Day/Tree Care** S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Trish Hogervorst-Rukke, B.L.M.
**Phone:** 375-5646
1717 Fabry Road S.E.
Salem, OR 97306
Specialists in wildlife, fisheries, archaeology, botany, recreation, forestry, hydrology, surveying and other areas.

**Arbor Day/Tree Care** F,S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Mark Wigg
P.O. Box 831
Salem, OR 97308
**Phone:** 588-2524
Mark is associated with the Audobon Society. He can provide money and trees for planting as well as a number of individuals willing to speak to students on the importance of trees and forestry.

**Cinco deMayo** S
Grade Level: K-12
Contact: Al Lugo,
**Phone:** 378-0070
Al has credentials in early childhood education and secondary education. He grew up in the south and is bilingual. He can provide information on other Hispanic holidays also.

**Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation**

Journal of Educational Public Relations, USPS 688230, issued quarterly, price $36, office of publication and business office P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill PA 17001-0657, publisher, editor and owner Albert E. Holliday, managing editor Joan M. Holliday, both of P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657, bondholders or other security holders - none.

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**Community Education**

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# Book Reviews

**by Arthur W. Steller**

Books for review and requests to serve as a guest book reviewer may be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Deputy Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, 30 Carruth St., Boston, MA 02124.

**The Administrative Career: A Casebook on Entry, Equity and Endurance.** By Catherine Marshall and Katherine Kasten. Corwin Press, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd,. Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. 1994, 140 pp., $18.

Educational Administration aspirants are confronted with challenges as soon as they begin considering a career in administration. These two authors share a wealth of research in this area, using a case study approach. The subtitle, "Entry, Equity, and Endurance," reflects the three themes of the cases, each of which present a challenge to would-be administrators. Equity seems to be a major focus of the authors, even in the case studies of the other two areas. As they address a variety of equity issues concerning current life situations, the bias directed toward female and minority administrators is given full coverage, as well as entry and advancement concerns. The authors do a great job of relating the dilemmas that face many administrative candidates, also.

Marshall and Kasten suggest that endurance — defined as persistence and strength of character in dealing with numerous conflicts — is not related to career longevity, as one might expect. They hint that conflicts may abbreviate the professional life of any school administrator.

Each section of case studies is followed by questions designed to stimulate discussion and/or analysis, making this book an excellent resource for a study group of administrators or individuals considering an administrative career, an inservice program, or a college course.

**It's About Time.** By John Guaspari. American Management Assn., 135 W. 50th St., New York, NY 10020. 1992, 97 pp., $12.95.

First the business world, and then education have had obsessions with "quality." Strive for quality and all your ills will fade away. At least that's the theory. But John Guaspari believes in quality with an added plus.

The challenge, whether a rival or a goal, can be bested with "time-based competition."

According to the main character in the fable, The Boss, speed is the new theme for success:

> "'Then our job', continued The Boss, 'is making sure that those 86,400 seconds each day are spent on not just doing things right, or doing the right things right, but doing only the right things and doing them right. Why? Because we don't have time to be doing anything we don't have to do'."

So speed is the new theme for success, if other preconditions are in place. "Quality is the answer to What. Customer is the answer to Why. Time is the answer to How."

This time-saving book takes only 45 minutes to read, and educators will find it both entertaining and enlightening.

**Why Didn't I Say That?! What to Say and How to Say It in Tough Situations on the Job.** By Donald Weiss. American Management Assn., 135 W. 50th St., New York, NY 10020. 1994, 208 pp., $21.95.

The educational workplace is fraught with potentially difficult situations where inadequate or faulty communication can lead to negative media attention, lawsuits, loss of employment, lower morale, and strained relationships. For example, teachers who have no trouble standing before their classes and talking throughout the day may clam up when faced with a principal with whom they disagree.

But help is available. Donald Weiss has written scripts to defuse emotional challenges and to guide the dialogue towards more productive discussions. He proposes that these prescripted conversations be rehearsed, but not memorized.

While the author recognizes that advance planning is not always possible, "On the other hand, planning in advance for a specific conversation...as when you have a scheduled meet-

ing with your boss or an underachieving employee, a quick reading of some relevant scripts (and a rehearsal, if possible), will put you into a frame of mind that allows you to engage in constructive discussion or dialogue."

Some of the specific and more unusual techniques Weiss suggests are using unique and strange words, asking questions and maintaining silence, role playing with a friend, and videotaping a practice session.

**Great Customer Servke on the Telephone.** By Kristin Anderson. American Management Assn., 135 W. 50th St., New York, NY 10020. 1992, $10.95

*Great Customer Service on the Telephone* is the kind of book that school secretaries ought to read. In fact, this quickly read piece would be worthwhile reading for any school personnel who use the phone. This primer can also show professionals how to increase telephone communication effectiveness.

Educators can view anyone on the telephone asking for assistance as a customer, whether that individual is outside the school district or an employee. "Any tip for phoning an external customer works equally well with your internal customers - your coworkers and your vendors — the service professionals who help you serve your customers."

The person who answers the telephone represents the school or district and leaves the caller with an impression of the organization. According to quoted Leonard Berry of Texas A&M, callers evaluate telephone contact according to the following criteria:

- Reliability — the ability to provide what was promised, dependably and accurately.
- Responsiveness — the willingness to help customers promptly.
- Assurance — the knowledge and courtesy you show to customers, and your ability to convey trust, competence, and confidence.
- Empathy — the degree of caring and individual attention you show your customers.
- Tangibles — the physical facilities and equipment, and your own and others' appearance. (Think this one doesn't belong? Consider how inferior telephone equipment sounds over the phone lines, and how often others see you when you're talking on the telephone.)

Skilled telephone service is not just exhibiting common courtesy and cheerfulness — one needs to know how to deal with irate callers, properly take messages, transfer and screen calls, redirect repeat and endless calls, ask questions, handle conference calls, attend to voice quality, and use the phone during emergencies. This guide will help readers create a more efficient phone service and better caller impressions about the organization.

**Public Opinion.** By Vincent Price. SAGE Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-2218. 1992.

The author, and expert in public opinion, has explored this particular communication concept from a historical context. He makes clear that public opinion is at the heart of much social science communications theory. The groundwork for this topic reaches well back through the centuries, but in the 20th century, public opinion is greatly emphasized.

This book highlights the questions and various themes running through the literature on this topic. In the author's words, "Perhaps the most prominent single theme in the close connection of public opinion with processes of discussion, debate, and collective decision making...public opinion — whether viewed in philosophical, political, sociological, or psychological terms — remains fundamentally a communication concept."

Public relations experts will feel most comfortable with Chapter 5 which "...suggests that public debate occurs mainly by virtue of interactions between elite political actors and their attentive spectators, facilitated in several important ways by the press." The resulting development of public opinion is a somewhat messy process more akin to a lively town meeting than a formal model of rational decision making.

While somewhat theoretical, this short volume presents a cogent analysis of the background of public opinion.

# Back Issues of the Journal Are Available

Selected issues of the Journal are available for purchase.

Highlights of each of these issues, plus the volume and number and year of publication, are listed. Note that all issues also contain a case study, book reviews, research reports and other feature articles.

- **4-3, 80.** Guide to a financial levy. Telephone surveys. How to write for publication.
- **9-1, 86.** Develop faculty-school partnerships. Effective employee relations. Photography tips.
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- **16-2, 95.** Low-cost methods for effective school-community relations. Guidelines for prospective writers to education journals. Parent involvement. Building a sense of "community" in a school.
- **16-3, 95.** Ways to build an effective internal school climate. Caution to administrators who wish to conduct a school public relation program. Self esteem. Committee failure. An elementary parent-public involvement program. Building a positive image of a board.

Number 4-3 through 13-1 are $12 each, U.S. funds. Any five are $50.

Numbers 13-2 through 15-1 are $9 each, U.S. funds. All seven of these are $50.

Numbers 15-3 through 16-3 are $15 each. All five of these are $60.
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Send orders to *Journal of Educational Relations*, Box 657, Camp Hill PA 17011.

# Guidelines

***RELATIONS***-The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles should be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association.

We prefer citations to be numbered sequentially in the text and then detailed following the article. An author can include references of related articles/book with address of publishers—in a separate list. We accept photographs, illustrations and tables as appropriate.

Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format, IBM format only, with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Relations*, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657 (UPS address-1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011) 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

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